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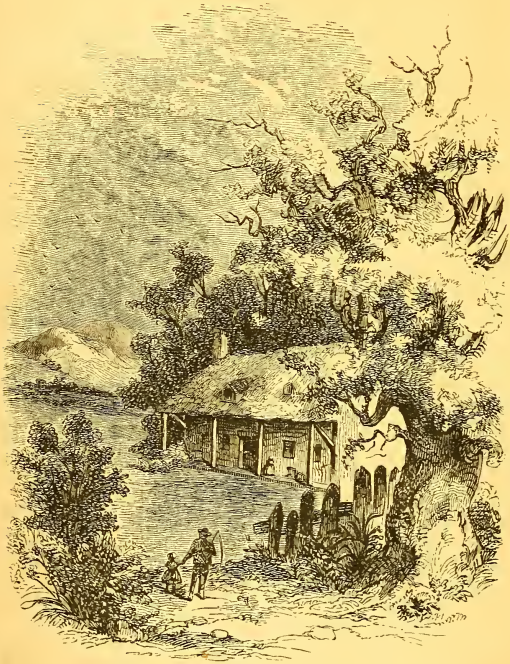

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# THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS OF LIFE

THE

# FIRST TWENTY YEARS OF MY LIFE.

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# Twenty Years of my Life.

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

It is my birthday,—my fiftieth birthday! All around me breathes the soft summer air. White clouds float dreamily over the blue sky, and the hills lie clothed in the sweet verdure which June only sheds over the earth. Yes, I was born in June, the loveliest of all the summer months. In just such a day as this, perhaps,—so bright, so full of all glad influences,—I drew my first breath.

I have been told I was a feeble infant, giving at first so few signs of life that it was doubted if I should survive the day. If I had not, if that feeble spark of being

had flickered and gone out, where and what would it have been now? How different from this soul, that beats in an earthly body, filled with hopes and fears and flooding memories of all the sad and sweet experiences of an earthly life! Was it well that that frail breath grew stronger and the pulsations of that little heart more firm and equal? Was it well that that germ of spiritual life unfolded into the passions, the aspirations, the knowledge of good and evil, of the full-grown man? It was well. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

My life has been a quiet one, marked by few startling incidents; yet, on reviewing it, I have thought it would be pleasant, and perhaps profitable, to write down some of its more prominent events. It may be that some young man beginning life may be warned by my mistakes or encouraged by my successes. I would gladly impart to others the lessons I have bought by hard experience, that they may not pay for them in the same costly currency. Few, I know, give heed to those who have preceded them, or will be taught save by personal trial; but

I will write, praying that some one at least may read and be the better for it.

My heart warms towards the young when I see them starting joyfully forth on the journey of life; for, in the words of a quaint Scotch writer, "It is a troublous water, the water of life; and it has often given me a sore heart to see the young things launched upon it like bairns' boats, sailing hither and thither in an unpurpose-like manner, having no thought of who it is that sends both the soft wind and the storm; and, if they have need of various instruments and a right pilot-man who guide ships over that constant uncertainty, the sea, I think not but there is far greater need of all manner of helps to pass safely through that greater uncertainty, life."

## CHAPTER II.

### CHILDHOOD.

I WAS born in a quiet little town, which I shall call Hillbury. It lies in the western part of New England, near one of the summits of the Green Mountain range. It is inhabited mostly by small farmers, who live by keeping dairies and raising stock. They are scattered about among the hills, their houses being often perched on some breezy knoll, where all the winds of heaven congregate in winter and a pure, delicious air fans them through the summer. Pure air, pure water, wild and picturesque scenery, are the birthright of these dwellers on the hills; and it is an inheritance by no means to be despised.

My first recollections are of sitting on a flat rock in our back-yard and looking out on the dense forest of pines and hemlocks

which covered the steep hill opposite. This rock was shaded by a spreading oak-tree, and in this shade was built our "cubby-house,"—the joint property of my younger sister and myself. How well I remember this cubby-house, the depository of all our choicest treasures! It was made of shingles laid on broken bricks, and had six shelves in it; and very capacious and splendid we thought it was. These shelves were adorned with broken bits of crockery, turkeys' feathers, egg-shells painted with indigo and celandine, and with acorns, of all sizes, transformed into cups and saucers, plates and platters, and any other articles of table-furniture we chanced to need. In front of the top-shelf hung a festoon of shells made of pretty blue robins' eggs, which had been perforated at each end and the contents blown out. Who had been cruel enough to steal them from the nest I know not; but we prized them highly. Another cherished treasure was an arm-chair made of corn-stalks by an ingenious cousin of our's, which certainly was a little unsteady in its habits, and never used, even to hold Susan's dollie, but none the less admired for that. But the

crowning glory of all was a small cup of china,—real china,—which had a handle and held water. To-be-sure, it had a little piece broken from it; but, judiciously arranged, this did not show, and it was considered as good as new. I can remember now the tiny wreath of leaves and roses which ran round the top: how pretty they were to our childish eyes, and how real and pure was our enjoyment of it! I do not think the most expensive toys of modern times give more pleasure to their possessors than our simple cubby-house gave us. We used to adorn it with clover-blossoms and buttercups in summer and with bright-coloured leaves in autumn, and give tea-parties to imaginary friends, who feasted on imaginary dainties.

I like to linger over this childish memory. There is something in it very sweet to me; for with it are linked the whispering of the winds through the large oak-tree, the shadows that came and went on those grand old woods, the murmur of insects, the gushing song of birds, and, sweeter than all, the sound of my mother's voice as she sang at her work. How they all come to

me now, as I sit by the window and write!

It is associated also with the pretty childish face and tones of my sister Susan,—a blue-eyed, "toddlin' wee thing," four years younger than myself. I loved this little sister dearly, though I often tyrannized over her, as older brothers are apt to do; and the first punishment I can remember receiving was from my mother for being unkind to her. I had pushed her down the back-door steps and left her screaming with fright and pain. I walked away, choosing to think she was not hurt,—only "making believe." I can remember thinking it was manly not to pay any heed to her,—to put my hands in my pocket and begin to whistle. I had not gone far before I heard my mother's voice, calling "Allen! Allen!" in its severest tone. I never thought of disregarding *that;* for I had received the old-fashioned training which, if it taught little else, thoroughly instilled that most valuable lesson,—OBEDIENCE.

I went back, trembling with a consciousness of guilt. Susan had ceased crying, and looked pitifully at me with her sweet

blue eyes, on whose lashes the tears were glistening. My mother held me at arm's length and gazed fixedly at me. There was something in her eye when she was displeased that always made me quail,—a clear light, a fixed determination, which left no hope of escape.

"Cowardly, cruel boy!" she said: "you may be thankful you did not kill your sister!" And she led me unresistingly to the door of an empty room which had been used as a store-closet, and turned the key upon me.

I was awed, but not subdued. I sat down on the floor, swelling with indignation and determined not to make any submission, let what would come. I remember the thoughts which came to me as I sat there. I had heard my father read the story of Hannibal,—how he swore eternal hatred to the Romans when he was nine years old; how he became a great warrior and crossed the Alps and gained glorious victories,—and, curiously enough, I identified myself with him. I too would be a hero,—a great man; would fight, and conquer, and die! What I should fight was

by no means clear to me. I don't think it was exactly my mother or little sister, but an impalpable something which prevented me from doing as I wished. I speak of this feeling more minutely because it was one which afterwards filled a large space in my mental life,—the desire to be a great man and to accomplish something wonderful.

My heroic vein did not, however, last long. Before noon I felt very hungry; and hunger is not conducive to heroism as a general thing,—certainly not in boys of seven years old. I cried aloud. I grew more angry, and pounded on the door in my rage. Then I heard my mother's light step, and her calm voice—oh, how calm and stern it was!—saying,—

"Allen, don't let me hear any more noise!"

There was a kind of magical spell in that tone of her's. I cannot well account for its peculiar influence, but I never could resist its power. It was probably owing in a great measure to her inflexible self-control and to the force of habit. I had never been allowed to contradict her, but from

my infancy had submitted—had been made to—in the veriest trifle, till the idea of opposition was wholly foreign to my nature, —one which never occurred to me when she spoke in that decided tone. This consciousness of being in the hands of a superior being (for such she was to me) quieted me. I do not think it exactly subdued me, or that if she had required it I would then have made any concession; but I ceased to struggle. I sat down by the window and gazed listlessly on the prospect. The sky was very bright and very blue, with not a single cloud. The hills were beautiful in their stillness as they rested against it, with the trees all motionless in the soft sunlight. The pastures on the hillside were green and sunny, with here and there groups of cows, some feeding quietly and some chewing the cud under the silent trees. No sound was heard but the tinkling of the water-drops as they fell into the trough. All was so still, so almost solemn, in that noonday radiance, that my rebellious soul was hushed. I wished I was good; but I was not, and I felt a kind of sullen certainty I never should be.

At last I fell asleep. When I awoke, long shadows lay across the hills, the cows were coming downwards to the bars, and a fresh breeze, laden with sweet forest-odours, was fanning my feverish cheeks. My angry feelings had all gone, and I felt kindly to every one. I heard tiny feet pattering on the kitchen-floor, and longed to put my arms round my darling little Susan, to go out with her to the cubby-house and drink tea from our acorn cups. How sorry I was I had ever been unkind to her! I thought, What if I had killed her? What if her head had struck on the stone at the bottom of the steps and she had never breathed again? I saw her, in imagination, in a little coffin such as Willie Reed was put in, went to her funeral, and saw her laid in the ground. It was a terrible fancy, and I wept aloud. I think I loved my little sister better than most brothers do, she was so gentle and so good; and when I thought of her dying my heart was broken. Just at this moment my mother came in. It was an auspicious moment, and she doubtless saw I was no longer obstinate, for she looked sadly, but kindly, at me.

"Will you promise," she said, mildly, "to be kind to your little sister?"

"Oh, yes, I will! I will be good to her!" I exclaimed, a torrent of tears falling from my eyes. "I don't want Susie to die and be buried in the ground! I will be good to her."

My mother was a woman of few words, but I saw a tear standing in her eye; and she stooped and kissed me (a rare thing for her) as she said,

"You have been very wicked, Allen; but I will pray for you, and I hope God will forgive you."

I don't know how it is with other children, but to me there was always something very solemn in the thought of my mother's praying for me. She never prayed in the presence of us children; but, when she went into her bedroom and locked the door, we knew she was at prayer, and the thought of it never failed to impress me with a kind of awe.

It may be my mother erred in not speaking more familiarly to us of sacred things; that we might have been won by it, if she had, to more loving thoughts of Jesus; but

one thing can be said in favour of her mode of training: it gave us a reverence for holy things; and reverence is a trait so indispensable to all true excellence that I sometimes think its value can scarcely be overestimated.

How sweet and beautiful to me were the quiet home pleasures that night!—the sitting down at the door with our basins of bread and milk, while the kitty came to watch us and eat the piece of bread we now and then fished out for her; the standing by the table to eat our gingerbread, (my piece was twice as large that night as usual, and I thanked my mother in my heart, though I dared not speak of it;) the coming home of the cows, driven by my father when he returned from work; the milking them on the green before the door; the straining of the brimming pails into the cheese-tubs, and the pouring the froth into kitty's dish, while Susan and I were allowed to dip our bright little tin cups carefully into the tub and quaff a draught sweeter and richer than any nectar!

My heart was at peace, and hence every thing around me was beautiful. Little Susan

seemed dearer to me than ever; and, when I had said my prayers and lay down beside her in the trundle-bed that night, my heart was full of gratitude. There was something of penitence, too, for having injured her, my own darling little sister; and I resolved I would be kind and gentle to her always,—*always*.

## CHAPTER III.

### HOME INFLUENCES.

For the first ten years of my life I was a delicate child, accustomed to quiet sports, such as girls usually like,—as my fondness for the cubby-house shows; but at that age I became stout and healthy, and ever after possessed an uncommon degree of physical vigour. With strength of body came greater activity of mind and heart, and the development of both the good and evil in my nature went on rapidly. The influences under which this development took place deserve to be noticed; for under a different training I should have doubtless been a very different being both in youth and manhood.

My parents were poor; that is, they were obliged to labour for their daily bread and had few possessions; yet there was in our

home none of the degradation and want which extreme poverty brings. If we had few of the comforts and none of the elegancies of life, our necessities were always supplied; and, as few of our neighbours were better off, there were no invidious comparisons made. Few children were ever happier in a father's house, I think, than Susan and myself; and few can look back to the *old home* with a more grateful, affectionate regard than fills our hearts now that the shadows of age are beginning to fall across our path.

*The old home!* Oh, how pleasantly it rises before me in its sweet greenness and tranquillity, with its murmuring mountain-brook; its encircling hills crowned with dark, rich forests, and the broad blue sky stretched over all, wider and deeper-tinted and more serene than any other sky can ever be!

The house was a small brown cottage, nestled quietly among the green trees around it, so as scarcely to attract the notice of the passer-by. It was by no means one of those fanciful modern houses, with pointed roofs and venetian blinds,

which are nowadays called cottages, but a long, low building, with a sloping, mossy roof projecting over its front, forming a rude piazza, or *stoop*, as we called it, in which we used to sit when the day's labours were ended and watch the shadows gather on the pine-woods opposite.

The cottage was of that genuine tint of brown artists love so well; but no artist's hands could have given those old boards their colouring. The soft breath of spring, the fiery suns of summer, the cold winds of autumn and the fierce snows and tempests of winter had all been painting them for more than half a century; and soft and pleasant to the eye were the hues they had imparted,—more picturesque and charming than any thing Art produces in her most successful moods.

It was a home-like place, with the great oak-tree overshadowing it, the green yard sloping away in front, and the high hills rising behind it; while at the south there was a grand outlook over a wide tract of hills and valleys. These in some places were rugged and bare, with monstrous rocks lying like huge sleeping

giants crouched upon the grass, in others smiling with the loveliest verdure; while here and there, all over the hills and valleys, were scattered clusters of trees grouped as gracefully as if designed expressly to gratify the eye of taste; and who, indeed, shall say they were not? I felt then and feel still that no landscape could be more beautiful than this,—especially at midsummer, when the sunlight rested softly upon it and the fleecy clouds floated over, checkering it with light, passing shadows, as lovely as they were fleeting. And then too in autumn, how gorgeous were those wooded hills in their "coat of many colours"! Can those who are born amid the brick walls of a city, and whose childish years are spent away from all the sweet influences of nature, love their early home as we did? Can they turn back to it with hearts as grateful, as full of tenderness and soul-felt joy, as are filling our's? I suppose they do; for, after all, it is the presence of love which most sanctifies a home. Yet to have one's birthplace amid such wild and picturesque scenery as

surrounded mine is certainly a cause for gratitude.

As I have said, my mother was a person of few words, possessing a determined spirit which kept my own in check. She was of a calm and sedate temperament, seldom manifesting violent emotion of any kind,—not, I think, so much from the absence of acute sensibilities and deep feelings as from an habitual self-control. This last, and a beautiful consistency between her words and acts, were very striking traits in her character. She was exceedingly watchful of us children; but her care never degenerated into that fretful anxiety mothers so often manifest. Her face, as I remember it, was a grave one, with strong, deep lines upon it. I do not think she could ever have been handsome; but her smile was the most beautiful I ever saw on a human face. It was like the fall of sunlight on a shady spot, transfusing and transforming what it touched. Her voice was one of rare sweetness,—clear and low-toned; and I cannot recollect her ever speaking on a high, angry key. She seldom laughed, and never loudly; but that beautiful smile

would irradiate her face whenever we gathered about her knee at twilight or had earned her approbation by doing right. She reverenced right,—duty; and we knew it, not so much because she talked about it as that it shone out through every action of her life, the moving, guiding principle. She never lavished caresses upon us; but a simple word or look of tenderness from her was worth more than the most profuse expressions from a more demonstrative nature would have been.

I have heard (but not till her spirit had gone to its rest) that she belonged to a proud family and had been delicately nurtured; that her marriage to my father was considered by her friends as quite beneath her; and that by it she became almost separated from them. I know that there was never any exchange of visits, or of little tokens of kindness, between us and relatives on my mother's side, while uncles, aunts and cousins of my father's abounded. However, we never heard of any grand relations, but were always taught to be contented with our humble lot and not to look for great things in the world.

My father was very unlike my mother; and I speak of him last, partly because a child's thoughts more naturally revert at once to his mother, but also because my mother was really the ruling spirit of our household. My father was of an amiable, easy disposition, contented to live on from day to day without thinking much of futurity, or, if he did think, never seeing a shadow on the prospect. He had less solidity of mind, I believe, but more literary taste, than my mother, and spent his leisure hours (of which, I fancy, he contrived to have many more than he ought) in reading of a most miscellaneous character. He was warm-hearted and affectionate, extravagantly fond of his children, especially of Susan, who was his pet and darling; never reproving us, but turning us over to our mother when any discipline was needed. He must have been a very handsome man in his younger days, for his well-formed features, his large dark eyes and his noble forehead made him a very fine-looking man in middle life. His figure, too, was good, his manners easy and winning, and his whole character of just the kind to inspire

affection rather than command reverence. And very dearly did we love him,—though, strange to say, I think we loved our mother better, and yet we feared her more. We bounded out joyfully to meet our father whenever he came home, overwhelmed him with caresses, laughed and frolicked with him; but in our graver moods we sought our mother and listened to her low, sweet voice with great delight, whether she told us stories of good children or led our childish thoughts upward to our great Father and our heavenly home. My dear, sweet mother! It seems but a little time since we stood beside her and watched the gathering darkness stealing over the hills and counted eagerly the bright, shining stars

> "As they came twinkling one by one
> Upon the shady sky."

What a great mystery to our childish minds was that "shady sky," bending over all things so silently, so solemnly! And those stars, winking and twinkling so brightly all night long! I used to gaze at them, as I lay in bed, through the white, looped-up window-curtain, wondering why

they were looking at me so and never stopped twinkling for a single minute. There was a strange charm to me also in the murmuring music of a little winding stream, whose voice I never heard in the daytime, but which was always audible as I lay in bed at night. Its melody thrilled my heart with a strange, sweet sadness; and it often comes to me now in the silent night-watches, stirring my soul to tears with its soft, liquid tone. So powerful and lasting are the little things "which lie about us in our infancy"!

I have wandered from what I was about to say of my mother's influence over us; but I am sure it was deeper and far more perceptible in moulding my character than my father's. In person I was said to be like my father, (I may say it without vanity, for surely this body, on which the storms of fifty winters have beaten, has little enough to boast of now;) but I think my mind was like my mother's, while Susan was a blending of the two. She had my mother's blue eyes, with my father's changing play of face; my mother's small figure, with my father's ease of manner; my mo-

ther's quiet devotion to duty, with my father's enthusiastic love of what was beautiful. Such, at least, she became in after-years,—my father's pride, my mother's stay. In our childhood I only knew she was the sweetest, dearest sister that a boy ever had.

Our home training in one respect was quite a contrast to that of most of our neighbours, and, I think, to that of most country farm-houses. Owing to her having been bred in a more refined atmosphere, or perhaps merely actuated by her own good sense, my mother laid great stress on manners, and exacted from us as rigid an observance of all the little proprieties of life as if we had been the children of the most wealthy citizen.

"There are some things poor people like us cannot get," she used to say; "but good manners cost nothing. We can certainly have these."

She never allowed us to come to the table till our hair, teeth, and nails were in perfect order. "Your hands may become black and rough," she would tell us, "by hard labour; but they never need be *dirty* when your work is done." So thoroughly

did this attention to personal cleanliness become a habit with me that through life I have never been able to sit down without attending to these things; and, though I have always been a working-man, I have never found the place where five minutes of time could not be taken for it. "Cold water, combs and brushes," she would say, "cost very little; and, if they did not, I would save the expense from other things rather than do without them."

When at the table, we were required to sit and to cut our food and hold our knife and fork in the proper way. We were never allowed to speak in a rude, coarse voice, to cry out, "Wha-at?" as I have heard some children do, instead of "Sir?" or "Ma'am?" or to say, "Give me this," "Give me that," but always, "Thank you for this," or, "Give me that, if you please, sir." If we ever asked for any thing impatiently, my mother's reproving eye was on us, and we instantly changed our form of expression. This civility of tone and manner, as my mother said, costs nothing; but it made our home a much pleasanter

and happier one, and its influence was felt through life.

Tidiness was another virtue rigidly enforced. Every book, paper, plaything and article of dress was laid in its place. And it is singular how easily children fall into orderly habits when it is the custom of the house. I don't think my mother scolded at us; but we knew it was expected we should put every thing away,—and we did, even if it was not always exactly pleasant or agreeable at the time. No shoes run down at heel or with strings draggling in the mud, no tattered aprons, no unbuttoned collars nor ragged elbows, were ever seen about us; so that, though our garments were always of the coarsest kind, and sometimes of necessity soiled, we could never be called untidy.

Our good Hillbury neighbours were somewhat scandalized at this particularity in little things. It was regarded by them as extreme folly; and of course Susan and I were often laughed at for being so "stuck-up" and "notional." When we carried our complaints to our mother, she comforted us by saying, "If you feel and speak

kindly to every one, they will soon cease to laugh." And so it was. I had faults enough of other kinds to alienate my schoolfellows; but Susan, refined and gentle as she was, was always a favourite, even with the roughest boy in school.

One day I had gone in to see Tom Reed,—a rough, good-natured boy, who was quite a crony of mine; and, while waiting for him to go somewhere with me, I overheard a conversation between his grandmother (who was an excellent old lady in her way) and a neighbour of her's,—a very coarse, rough woman. I remember it as well as if I heard it yesterday.

"Did you ever see any thing like the way Miss Richmond is bringing up her children? They'll be spile't as sure as fate. Just think of making such a fuss over their finger-nails every day of their lives! And I don't see, for my part, as they look any better than other folk's children, after all. There's Allen Richmond, tied to his mother's apron-string, drawlin' out his fine words: its enough to make a body sick to hear 'em. But he han't got a coat to his

back but what's been patched, with all his airs."

"I guess they're pretty hard pushed sometimes; but Mrs. Richmond does all she can," was Grandmother Reed's reply. "I am afraid myself the children won't have much spunk. I don't believe in makin' boys too fine and nice. It don't help to earn a livin'."

"No, indeed! I should like to see our John sayin' 'Thanky, ma'am' every breath he draws. John'll be good for something. He's got real grit, and will make his way in the world, I can tell you, better than such milk-and-water chaps as Allen. Why, there's our Nancy: I sent her to boardin'-school three months, and she come home dreadful finical. But I took down her sails pretty quick, I tell you. I warn't a-goin' to have her mincin' her words round *my* house. 'Nancy,' says I, 'if a kittle biles, it *biles*, and I won't have anybody talking about *boil* where I am.' Nancy's made a pretty likely girl, after all. But there's Jane Hamilton was just spile't with her boardin'-school airs and graces. She couldn't wash dishes, nor do nothin' else, for fear she

should black her fingers. And see what she is now,—a poor, shiftless crittur as ever lived."

Absurd as this talk was, I was extremely mortified by it at the time; for to be a laughing-stock is of all things most terrible to a boy of twelve. When Tom and I started off together, I tried to talk as loud and vulgar as he did, and carried my zeal for imitation so far as to say "I swow!" when I got home. I was in the wood-shed, and the door was open into the kitchen where my mother sat. When I went in, she asked, looking at me steadily,

"Allen, what did I hear you say?"

"Not much of any thing," I replied, hanging my head.

"No equivocating, child. Tell me at once what you said."

I repeated the words in a very faint tone, and my face felt very hot.

"I am surprised to hear you use such a coarse, low word. Never let me hear it again. It is a vulgar expression which has no meaning in it."

"But, mother," I said,—for the mortification I had suffered was still rankling with-

in,—"mother, everybody is laughing at me and calling me names. I feel ashamed to be different from other boys." And I told her the conversation I had heard. A quiet smile passed over my mother's face.

"I am sorry you should have overheard this, Allen," she said; "but you are very foolish to be troubled by it. I am sure you must be weak if you can't bear being laughed at without getting angry. You will always find those who will differ from you and me on many points; but if we are in the right it will be very silly to join with them from fear of a little ridicule. The first step towards manliness is to quietly abide by your own convictions."

"But I believe I am getting spoiled like Jane Hamilton," I said, in a dolorous tone: "everybody says so."

"Half a dozen of your school-mates and their mothers and grandmothers don't make everybody," she answered, pleasantly; "and I think no more than that laugh at or pity you. As for Jane Hamilton, her story is a very sad one. Her parents made a great sacrifice to send her to a boarding-school for a year, where, instead of becoming

thoroughly acquainted with any one branch of knowledge, she got a smattering of several. Her manners were as vulgar as ever, though in a different way. She made great pretensions to being a lady, considered work disgraceful, and left her mother to toil for her while she lounged about in idleness, wearing a great deal of finery; and at last she married a showy spendthrift, very much like herself. As Mrs. Jones says, she is a poor, miserable creature. God forbid a child of mine should ever resemble her in manners or character!

"I want you, Allen," she said, after a little pause, "to be prepared to fill your own place in life respectably and usefully. I should be very sorry to see you attaching an undue importance to dress or manners. Nothing is more contemptible than a fop; but habits of personal neatness and correct conversation are very different from foppishness, and are one element of a manly self-respect. I hope you will always discriminate between true refinement and that shallow, disgusting imitation of it which is always despicable. Your tastes are all simple, and I hope always will be, let your

future condition be what it may. You will have to earn your bread by hard labour; but," she said, in a tone of great tenderness, as she stroked the curls back from my flushed forehead, "I do want you to be always a *gentleman*, Allen, in the highest sense of the word,—*gentle* to all, never coarse or vulgar in act or speech or thought, and always *manly*,—too manly to stoop to deceit of any kind or to lose a proper self-respect. Many are outwardly refined who are inwardly impure and vulgar, and many mistake pretension for gentility; but the true gentleman is always modest and unobtrusive; and such I wish you to be. Above all things, I would have you superior to that weakness which regards labour as contemptible; and I am sure nothing in your training has tended to give you such an impression. My example," she added, smiling, "as far as it goes, has certainly been in favour of industry,—though your poor mother should not praise herself. But the refinement of manner Mrs. Reed's neighbour objects to has never prevented me from being useful, I hope."

Ah, how well we knew that! for, chil-

dren as we were, we saw that the great burden of maintaining the family rested on my mother; and, as I stood by her side that night, I felt that this dear mother was worthy of my truest love and gratitude. In after-years I was especially grateful for this attention to our manners; and to it I attribute in a great measure whatever of worldly success I may have had. This careful home training gave me self-respect when I was brought into contact with the world, and preserved me from any taste for low and vicious society or indulgences. Poor we always might be, but, with such habits of propriety instilled into us, never low and vulgar in the true meaning of the words.

I should omit one important feature of our home influences if I did not speak of my father's habit of reading aloud. Always when the weather permitted us to have a light, he drew up after tea to our little table, opened his book or paper, and perfect silence was enjoined upon us while he read. Newspapers were comparatively few in those days, and we only saw a Boston weekly and the county paper, which was

a small sheet printed in miserable type. Books were not common, either; but my father always managed to procure them from some source. The minister's library was open to him, and history, biography and books of travel all passed through his hands.

This forced listening soon became a rich treat to us, and in this way we acquired a taste for reading; for my father skilfully managed to make remarks which interested us and gave us a desire for further information. My own passion for reading became in time almost insatiable. There was little of juvenile literature in those days. Indeed, "The Shepherd of Salisbury Plains," Jane Taylor's "Hymns for Infant Minds," and Janeway's "Token for Children," were the only children's books that came in my way. The youthful reader was forced to read books designed for mature minds; and I devoured Rollin's ten volumes of ancient history, Goldsmith's England and Rome, and even the voluminous church-histories of Mosheim and Milner. I did not fully understand them; but on looking back I see that a pretty good knowledge of history,

which has been most valuable to me through my whole life, was acquired before I was fourteen years old,—acquired in those long, quiet evenings by the light of one dim tallow candle and the flickering blaze of a wood fire on the hearth. How pleasant they are to look back upon, those evening hours, when I made acquaintance with Leonidas and Aristides, Cyrus and Xerxes, Alexander and Hannibal, Scipio and Cato, and a host of other ancient worthies, who stood before me living, breathing men, whom I loved or hated, whose conquests or defeats made my heart glow with delight or burn with indignation!

Like all boys, I was dazzled by military glory, though a purer admiration for patriots and martyrs was also kindled in my breast. Another class of books had a charm for me, as for all young minds: I mean books of travel. With what absorbing interest I read the narratives of Captain Riley and Robbins, and dreamed of sandy deserts, and cruel Arabs, and camels, and caravans, by night! Susan enjoyed these too; and many an imaginary expedition she and I accomplished on a high-peaked saddle, perched

on a camel's back, suffering cruelties and hardships in comparison with which those of our book-heroes were tame and spiritless.

From my father's reading them with entertaining and instructive comments, we learned, too, to enjoy the wit of the "Spectator," the delicate, if somewhat sickly, sentiment of Mackenzie, and the more objectionable humour of Sterne. When I remember these boyish acquisitions, I am astonished to see how much can be accomplished in the humblest farmer's home where a taste for reading is early formed. I doubt if any condition of life is more favourable to the growth of a healthful love of books; for the farmer's evenings are his own and less broken in upon than those of any other class.

When I recall the relish with which I opened a book of history or a new volume of biography, I cannot but ask myself whether the wide-spread diffusion of literature especially designed for the young, and diluted to meet their supposed mental weakness, is really the blessing we are accustomed to consider it. That it has its advantages

cannot be denied. But has it not some evils,—not unavoidable, perhaps, but still very common? There are more readers at the present day; but I must believe that those who did read formerly became vigorous from the solid nature of their mental food, and that many of our books for the young are altogether too childish to benefit the reader.*

* The multiplication of children's books is no greater, comparatively, than that of books for older readers. The country is full of books and magazines and papers, and they are very cheap and very accessible. Without great discrimination and watchfulness and decision on the part of parents and teachers, children will have and read what will do them no good and much that will do them positive harm. The press is quite as serviceable to the followers of Belial as to the friends and disciples of Christ.—[*Pubs.*]

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CHURCH AND SCHOOL.

In New England the church and school were always prominent institutions. Our village-church, or meeting-house, as it was called, was one of the old style common fifty years ago. It stood on the very highest point of land in Hillbury, its tall spire piercing the clouds and its double row of windows gleaming brightly in the rays of the setting sun. A walk of half a mile brought us to it; and we were never absent "in summer's heat or winter's cold." It had large square pews, enclosed by a high railing, and a very high pulpit, with an immense sounding-board suspended over it. How this sounding-board could remain there without any visible support was always a great mystery to me; and I cherished a secret fear that it would some day come

down and crush the minister. There were no stoves, and of course the house was very cold in winter. We wore heavy garments and carried foot-stoves; but, in spite of them, our fingers and toes ached sadly.

My seat when I first began to go to church was in a little chair which stood close beside a large straight-backed one, in which there always sat an old lady. How very old she looked to me! I never saw her on weekdays; but a kind of intimacy grew up between us. She always had a pleasant smile of welcome for me when I took my seat beside her; and when I grew sleepy in sermon-time—which I invariably did—she would produce a stalk of dill or caraway, a peppermint or two, a bit of orange-peel, or half a dozen raisins, which always proved exceedingly refreshing and of a wakeful tendency. I always watched her hand when it travelled in the direction of her capacious pocket,—though it frequently produced only a snuff-box, which was passed to another old lady in the pew. To watch its circulation was a pleasant relief to the monotony; and its bright-coloured lid, with a picture of a spread eagle on it, always

struck me as an admirable specimen of art. That wrinkled but kind face became most pleasantly associated with the Sabbath service; and if sometimes in a summer day, when I had become too drowsy for even caraway or peppermints to rouse me, I was permitted to lay my head in her lap and go to sleep, my happiness was complete.

One pleasant summer Sunday, the kind face, the welcoming smile, were wanting. My aged friend was absent. Everybody said, "Widow Sherman must be ill." And when on the next Friday, at the setting of the sun, the church-bell tolled softly out on the summer air stroke after stroke till we had counted seventy-nine, we knew the aged saint had passed away to worship with the redeemed above.*

* It was formerly the custom in many parts of New England, when a person died during the night, to toll the church-bell at sunrise. Three distinct strokes were given for a male adult, two for a female, and one for a child. The age was then indicated in the same way. If the death occurred in the daytime, the same thing was done at sunset. In a country-village, where every occurrence, and especially sicknesses and casualties, were generally known, it was not difficult to determine whose death was thus significantly announced.—[*Pubs.*]

I could not have been more than seven years old; yet I remember feeling real grief,—not altogether selfish, I think, for her kindness had touched my heart. I felt lonely on Sundays beside that vacant chair, and mourned that I should see that kind face no more in God's earthly courts. Shall we ever sit side by side in the upper temple? God grant we may, and unite our hearts in a purer worship!

Our minister was an aged man, tall, with a stately person and serious face. He wore small-clothes, and I greatly admired his long black silk stockings and silver knee-buckles as he went up the pulpit-stairs. He had considerable reputation as a theologian; but I was too young to feel much interest in the sermon, and devised different methods of whiling away the time, of which tracing the carved leaves and balls on the edge of the sounding-board was a favourite one.

At long intervals the venerable pastor called at our house, when he always patted me kindly on the head, asked me, "Who was the first man?" "Who was the first woman?" and "What was the chief end of man?" I looked upon him as a being of a

superior order, and felt too much restraint to enjoy his presence; but my mother valued his visits beyond price. They always talked long and seriously together; and before leaving he prayed with us, the family all standing reverentially.

When I was eight years old, a colleague was settled—a very elegant-looking man we thought him — from the city. How kindly he spoke to all the children when he visited the school or met us in the street, when the boys always took off their hats and bowed and the girls dropped bashful little curt'sies! What a sweet young wife he brought among us a few months after, whose delicate features and graceful manners made Susan and me think she was like the beautiful ladies of olden time, whom our father read about in books! The sermons of the young minister began to fix my attention; for he sometimes drew vivid pictures from the life of Jesus, and spoke so tenderly of his great love for us that I often determined I would some time be his true disciple. Susan and I used to talk about these sermons and serious things as we sat at twilight on the rock beneath

the old oak-tree (our cubby-house had gone: we had outgrown that now). We talked of dying, and wished we might go and live in one of the beautiful stars above us; for we meant to become good before we died. There was no religious feeling in my heart, only a dreamy longing for something bright and beautiful; but I think Susan was more religiously inclined than I. Our aged pastor died; and, as from month to month the young servant of Christ told us of the Saviour's love and besought us to give our hearts to him, I often wept; but it was a passing emotion. Susan wept; but she prayed also,—which I never did, unless an occasional formal repetition of the Lord's Prayer to quiet my conscience could be called praying; but even then I knew that was no true prayer in God's sight.

We received less direct religious instruction at home than some children. There were no Sunday-schools; and when we had recited the Catechism our Sunday's task was over. But in time we began to commit hymns and passages of Scripture to memory and repeat them sometimes to my father, but oftener to my mother. These,

not being exactly required of us, but always gaining an approving word or smile from our parents, became a favourite employment; and the beautiful hymns and psalms then committed abide with me yet, and have been a solace in many a weary hour when the cares of life were pressing heavily upon me.

Our school-experience was similar to that of most others of that day. I was fond of study, but very fond of play too, and quite as proud of my proficiency in wrestling, climbing and skating as in the studies within-doors. We were carried through the usual routine of studies,—first, Webster's Spelling-Book, then Murray's Grammar and Cumming's Geography, (in which the United States were bounded on the west by the Mississippi River and all beyond was designated as "unexplored regions,") then Pike's Arithmetic, and afterwards Daboll's. These I made myself fully master of: at least, I could repeat every word verbatim. I could also declaim in a powerful manner, from Scott's Lessons, "My voice is still for war," and

"My name is Norval.
On the Grampian hills my father feeds his flock,"

as well as the long speech of Cicero before the Roman Senate against Caius Verres.

These, I think, were all my school-accomplishments, except writing, which was taught in the winter evenings. History, natural philosophy and chemistry were unknown then in common schools; and I often heard my mother regret her inability to send me for a term or two to an academy in a flourishing town near us where they were taught. But we only just contrived to live; and such an unnecessary expense was not to be thought of. My father had but little energy, and, being somewhat of an invalid, was unable to do more than cut the hay on his little farm and cultivate a small patch of corn and another of potatoes.

The chief reliance of the family for maintenance was on the dairy. We kept six cows; and the labour of this—except driving the cows to and from pasture and milking them, which fell to my share—devolved upon my mother, assisted by Susan when she was old enough to help. There was an old debt due upon the farm; and, energetic

and economical as my mother was, we could never quite discharge it. Her utmost efforts only paid the interest and a small portion of the principal each year. By the time I was ten years old, being a well-grown lad, I was occasionally hired out to do little jobs (*chores* he called them) to a farmer in the neighbourhood; and the little gained in that way was scrupulously saved to buy me a new cap or a pair of shoes or warm waistcoat. I never considered this a hardship, but felt a glow of pride as I carried my hard-earned wages to my mother and saw her approving smile and heard her say, "You are getting to be a great comfort to us, Allen."

It was an honest pride growing out of a consciousness of ability to do something for myself, and a feeling which the indolent children of wealth might well covet, for it is a luxury known only to the labouring poor.

## CHAPTER V.

### PLANS.

The years passed by, and I had grown up into a tall, vigorous lad of sixteen, full of animal spirits, and full, too, of the restlessness of a boy's nature. The individual character (the *me*, as the transcendentalists would say) had been developing amid these influences, gradually and silently.

I was far less happy now than when I was a child; for, though I was still most devotedly attached to my mother and little sister, (as I still called Susan,) a feeling of discontent was growing up within me. I began to look with contempt on the brown cottage and the little farm. The old childish wish to become a great man, whose exploits should be heralded abroad, had not died out, but had gained strength till it pervaded my whole soul, colouring every

plan and hope. When I read of mighty warriors, I longed to fight, to become world-renowned as they were, to have my name go down to all future generations; and—foolish boy that I was—I fancied I felt within me the strength of purpose and energy of soul requisite to such a career. When I read of self-denying men who had given every thing that was dear to them on earth, and even life itself, for their country and religion, my heart glowed with a desire to be a patriot and a martyr,—to suffer and die for my principles; and I fancied I could do it heroically, if only the occasion offered.

Poor, ignorant, self-conceited boy! It is amusing now, and yet sad enough, to recall those fancies and contrast them with what has actually been done "on the world's great field of battle." Yet such desires were not all folly. They were aspirations—blind and absurd enough, to-be-sure, but still aspirations—for something better than a mere animal existence. I confided some of the most modest of my wishes to my mother; and, instead of checking the current entirely, she wisely sought to divert it into other channels. Longfellow's "Psalm

of Life" had not then been written; but something akin to its spirit imbued my mother's counsels. She used to speak to me of life as a field of labour and of conflict, in which I was to work and war under the eye of God, and to tell me that the great victory to be won was over my own evil propensities and over sin and misery in every form and place. "To do the work of life well," she would say, "is not to acquire riches or fame, but just to do what God requires of you in the circumstances in which he has seen fit to place you."

Such calm and quiet views of life were not at all agreeable to me,—not at all in accordance with the fiery fervour of my desires, which were burning to overleap all barriers to earthly distinction and fretting at every obstacle which lay in my path. I longed to be something in the world,—to stand out prominently before my fellows and to be acknowledged as their superior. And "in the heat of youthful blood" I cared little for the peace and joy which come from God only.

I found fault with my obscure birth, my poverty, my want of opportunities for self-

improvement. I saw sons of rich men fitting for college, whose minds, according to my modest estimate, were not half so capable as mine of improving these advantages; and I considered it unjust. I murmured against God and the allotments of his providence, which chained me down to a life of toil. I seldom ventured to utter these complaints in my mother's presence; but I almost frightened poor little Susan by the vehemence with which I poured such feelings into her ear.

Nothing could be more absurd than the visionary schemes I carried about in my heated brain; and no boy who had lived a less secluded life could have been so ignorant and foolish. Susan, with her loving heart, would try to comfort though she could not understand me.

"Are we not happy, Allen?" she would say, fixing her tearful eyes affectionately on my face. "Has not God been *very* good to us? What a dear home we have, and such a kind father and mother, who are willing to do any thing for us!" But her gentle words were like rose-leaves thrown on the

foaming stream, which whirled them heedlessly along.

"*Happy!* Do you call it being happy to drudge on here forever in this mean, miserable way,—buried alive among these old black hills and working like a slave—for what? Just to get bread to eat! I don't mean to do it. I mean to go out into the world and make something of myself. It is well enough for girls to stay here, who can do housework and sew and knit, and who haven't spirit enough to wish for any thing better; but *I* sha'n't do it."

I was the same cruel brother who pushed his little sister off the steps,—though the pain I caused her now was doubtless more acute. That gentle sister, refined and delicate in person and in all her tastes, who worked on from day to day almost beyond her strength in the performance of the homeliest household tasks, never complaining, but always looking bright and speaking cheerily,—how superior she was to me, disdaining in my selfishness to do the work God had given me, and thus adding to the burdens of others! And yet I looked down

upon her,—the pure-minded, warm-hearted child!

Susan had at this time received into her soul a new principle,—the love of God, and the desire to do his will; and it gave her a sweet peace, to which mine was an utter stranger. She had spoken to me of the blessed Friend who had forgiven her sins and taught her to draw near to him in love and faith, and had sought to make me a partaker in her new joys; but I would not listen. I felt almost angry with her for having feelings into which I could not enter. A barrier seemed to have risen up between us, separating her soul from my impatient, selfish, guilty one; and, though in my inmost heart I knew she was right and I wrong, I chose to treat her as an inferior, incapable of understanding my loftier aspirations. She was scarcely more than a child; but her heart had been enlarged by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit into a nobleness and expansion which mine was too mean and low in its desires to comprehend. Yet I had manliness enough to feel grieved when I saw her weeping at my

injustice; and I put my arms caressingly around her.

"I did not mean to grieve you," I said. "I am very wicked, I believe; but then, Susan, I am so unhappy I cannot help it."

"I was foolish to cry," she said, with a bright smile; "but I do not love to hear you talk so. Oh, Allen, how I wish I could do something to make you happy! I wish you could go away from home,—though it would be sad enough living here without you; but I know you are different from other boys and would make something if you could only have the opportunity. I wish I was an elder sister and could earn money to educate you, as some sisters have done."

"I wish there would come another war," I said. "I would enlist to-morrow. I would kill the British,—hundreds of them,—and get to be a general,—a great, glorious general like Washington or Jackson." (For the exploits of the latter were then so recent as to make him the object of fireside and newspaper eulogy.)

"Oh, I wouldn't like you to kill people, Allen. I don't think it can be right. Only

think of shooting a man like yourself and seeing him fall down at your feet all bloody and cold and dead!"

"But then in war it's so different. It's right to kill men then, hundreds and thousands of them,—it's glorious,—it's a victory! and everybody admires and praises it, and they sing songs and have celebrations. Oh, I should like to be a soldier! I would certainly go and fight if there was a war."

"But I do not believe father and mother would approve of it."

"I would go if they didn't. I would run away in the night and show that I had some spirit. Every man who becomes distinguished has spirit enough to act for himself; and I mean to be brave and not fear any thing."

It seems to me as if few boys at sixteen could have such absurd notions of courage and heroism as these; but perhaps some do, and, like me, fancy that to resist the rightful authority of parents and guardians is showing a brave and manly spirit. Susan —inferior in years, and, as I then chose to

think, in knowledge—had much more correct ideas of right and wrong.

"But, oh, you would not do that, Allen," she said: "it would be wicked to run away from home. And what if you should, and then get killed?" And the child's tender heart overflowed at her eyes.

"Oh, I shouldn't get killed. Great warriors never do. They rush right into the very thickest of the battle and always come off victorious. Sometimes their horses are shot under them; but they mount, and rush forward again. They are never killed, or scarcely ever; and, if they are, it is such a glorious death! Don't you remember how Wolfe was killed on the plains of Abraham? Oh, who would not die a death like that?"

"So my boy would be a soldier and die a glorious death?" said my mother, who had entered the room unperceived and now stood beside me.

I blushed; for somehow my heroic visions always grew less brilliant in the clear atmosphere which surrounded her. "But does he see no heroism in overcoming his own wild and wicked passions, no greatness in sacrificing his own inclinations to obey his

parents? I wish you may be a soldier," she said, laying her hand tenderly on my head, —"a soldier and a hero, and win the most glorious of victories." She was silent; but, as her hand rested there, I knew a prayer was in her heart for me.

"I am sorry to hear you talk so foolishly," she added, after a pause. "You are old enough to distinguish real from false courage, and to know that no man ever became heroic till he could control *himself*,—a lesson you have yet to learn, I fear. The sooner you take this first step towards becoming independent and courageous the better."

"But, mother," I said, "you cannot understand me. I am not a woman, but a man; and I cannot be contented to settle down here and live a stupid, humdrum life year after year. I could not do it: it would kill me!" I said, vehemently.

"I know you have a restless temperament, and have long foreseen that the time would come when you would long to leave the quiet nest which has sheltered you and the hearts which have loved you so well. But I had hoped you would be willing to

stay with us a little longer. The years have passed so swiftly I cannot feel that you are really grown up to a man's stature. To me you still seem my little playful boy, my laughing Allen, who loved to stand by me and hear stories before he went to bed.

"But I hope I am not selfish. I wish to have that done which is best for you, if we can ascertain what it is. But you must do nothing rashly, my son. It is no trifling matter to decide upon an employment for life. I believe there is a work for every human being to do in this world,—a special work designed for him, which no one else can do so well as he."

"But how can one know what his work is?" I said. "I'm sure it can't always be easy to tell."

"It can be ascertained partly by the circumstances in which God has placed us and partly by the capacities he has given us. There is sometimes so strong a bias towards a particular pursuit as to point that out quite clearly as the one to be selected; but it is not always the case. There is always, however, one mode of knowing what it is intended we shall do: the soul that asks

light and guidance from on high is sure to receive it. Oh, Allen!" she said, with an emotion I had never seen her manifest before, "if I could only see you forming your plans in reference to God's will and not to your own selfish enjoyment, I should not feel a single anxiety about you. If He was your guide, I would let you go forth from me and the restraints of your quiet home into the world cheerfully; but with your impetuous passions, all unrestrained by religious principle, I do fear for you! How can I let you go from me," she said, with another clasp, as if she would bind me to her very heart, "until you are united to a better Friend and Guide?—you, my first-born, my only son, my precious, precious child!"

I could not speak. Did my mother love me so,—my quiet, gentle, self-possessed mother, who I had sometimes fancied was rather cold and stern?

"We will think upon this and talk it over again," she said. "It is autumn now, and by spring you will have fixed upon some plan; and when the birds and flowers come we will let you fly forth from your cage."

She meant to speak cheerily; but there was an undertone of sadness in her voice which touched my heart.

"Dear mother," I said, clinging to her side as I used to when a child, "I feel as if it would be hard to leave the dear old home, after all. I will not go. I will stay here and take care of you and father when you get old. I will not be so selfish as to think only of my own enjoyment."

"I want you to be unselfish," she said, with one of her bright smiles; "but it does not follow you should always stay here. I do not think you would find scope for your energies on this small farm. I wish that you should have the faculties God has given you thoroughly developed, and that you should make the most you can of yourself. Have you ever thought, Allen, what you would like best to do,— to what business you were best adapted?"

How her calm, sensible words put to flight a host of my boyish fancies! I was almost afraid to tell her what had been the cherished dream of my boyhood; but I found courage at last to say, "I have always longed to be a soldier, and nothing else."

"I think this is because you have formed an entirely wrong idea of what a soldier's life is. You have looked only on the bright and alluring side; and there is a most repulsive and terrible one. I do not believe you would like to spend your whole life in killing people, even if you could,—in making widows and orphans."

"But war brings blessings. The great general who achieves a victory frees his country from oppression and gives it liberty as well as glory," I said, enthusiastically.

"He sometimes does, and sometimes accomplishes just the reverse."

"But *I* would fight only for freedom and in a just cause," I said.

"Fortunately, our country is in possession of her freedom already; and every good citizen who quietly lives an honest, industrious and godly life does more for the glory of his country than a soldier."

"But, if a war should come, ought we not all to fight? Would you not let me go then?"

"If such a terrible calamity as a war should ever befall our country, it will then be time enough to decide what your duty is.

Enough have always been found to rally to her standard in the hour of need. I would have you a true patriot, Allen,—an ardent lover of your country; and then you will be always willing to do what is for her best good in all emergencies. But for you to be a soldier is impossible. We keep no standing army in time of peace, and only a small number are allowed to enter our military academies and receive the thorough training required to make a good officer; and you, who have no influential friends, cannot hope to be one of those few. I fancy your impatient spirit would hardly brook the severe restraints of a military school, even if you could obtain a place in one; but, as I have said, it is simply impossible. So that bright dream must be given up, my son. You must replace it by something more real."

I sighed, for it had been a bright dream; and, though I could never have expected it would be actually fulfilled, I had allowed myself to live an ideal life; and when my hands had been busy with the hoe or rake my imagination had taken me into camps and battle-fields, where I had seen waving

banners, glistening epaulettes and nodding plumes, and heard the music of drums and bugles, the roaring of cannon and the shouts of victory. Like him of whom the poet afterwards sang,—

> "In dreams, through camp and court I bore
> The trophies of a conqueror,
> In dreams, the song of triumph heard;"

and so fascinating had these dreams been that the awakening to the realities of life which lay around me was far from pleasant.

To the question which still returned, What occupation in life should I choose? I ventured to make another answer.

"I think I should like to go to college, if I could, and get an education."

"If your means were sufficient," replied my mother, "perhaps I should like that, though I am far from feeling that a professional man is of necessity the most useful and happy; but I do not think your bent is so strong in that direction as to point it out for you when such obstacles lie in the way."

"But many a poor boy has struggled through an education without help; and I

have heard it said that such make the finest men."

"Yes, that is true; but it is those who have an intense thirst for study as well as great perseverance and energy. Such, Nature singles out for students by the gifts she has bestowed; and of such we feel almost certain that they will succeed. If I thought you were one of these, I might advise you to hazard every thing in the pursuit of learning; but I do not think you are. You are only a medium scholar, Allen, nothing remarkable."

"But I am fond of books. Few, I think, are more so."

"Yes; but it is of books which give you amusement. You have a vivid imagination which delights in strange scenes and stirring incidents; but you have no fondness for close, protracted study, very little taste for mathematics or works on science,—for any thing, in fact, which taxes your mind very severely. I have watched the unfolding of your mental powers closely, and I think I am right in the conclusion that you would make only a second or third rate scholar,—one of those of whom we say, 'He would

have made an excellent business-man, but he is an inferior minister or lawyer. What a pity he mistook his calling!' Yes, I think you are essentially active in your temperament, not studious. Am I not right?"

How I winced under these remarks! How mortifying to my pride to be so quietly set down among ordinary minds! And, to make it doubly galling, I felt in my inmost soul that this valuation of my powers was substantially correct. I was too much pained to answer at once, and my mother continued:—

"But, even if it were otherwise,—if I thought your's was one of the few minds that make their mark on the world,—I should hesitate in advising you to attempt a collegiate course. It is a weary struggle for one to enter upon without friends or resources; and it too often happens that by the time a poor student is able to commence his professional career he is broken down in health and burdened with debt, so that his future life is obliged to be a sad struggle to rise above the difficulties which beset him. I know there are brilliant exceptions

to this; but of how many is it true! Do you feel disappointed, my child? Do you feel as if your mother judged you unfairly, —undervalued your capacities?"

"I don't know," I said, sorrowfully: "perhaps you are right. And yet, mother, I do feel a desire to be something in the world, and it does seem to me as if I had ability of some kind. I don't believe I was made to drudge all my life just to get my daily bread."

I could scarcely keep back the bitter tears which welled up in my heart.

"No, my dear child, you certainly were not. You were made to be useful and happy in God's world; and you will be if it is not your own fault. You have been richly gifted in some respects,—unless," she added, with a smile, "I have been blinded by a mother's partiality. Examine your own capacities and character for yourself. Ascertain what faculties you possess and what is the best use you can make of them. Look at the subject soberly. Hitherto you have been dreaming of impossibilities, like a child. Now rouse yourself to the higher work of determining what you can do, what

you ought to do and to be, and, like a man, meet whatever difficulties lie in your way. The actual duties of life are worthy of all the enthusiasm you have been expending on imaginary ones. I hope to see you a man your mother can honestly be proud of; but you must not fall into the mistake of supposing your respectability or happiness depends upon any particular employment or position in society. It is you who must make the place, not the place you.

"But it is late, my son, and your mother has preached a long sermon for her. Think upon these things quietly and prayerfully, —yes, prayerfully, Allen. You need God's guidance. He offers it. Do not reject it. Do not go forth to the work of life without taking His blessing with you, my child,— my beloved child!"

There was a tear in her eye as she said "good-night;" and my mother did not often weep.

When I went to my room that night my heart was full of conflicting emotions. I was a passionate, restless boy, seeing things only dimly, and yet with some faint glimmerings of light breaking in. Wounded

vanity, a desire to prove myself superior to what I was considered to be, struggled with a tender regard for my mother and with a consciousness that I was really weak and ignorant, without any guiding purpose or proper motive. I saw that I had floated along thus far on the current of life without thinking of the port to which I was bound. "I will rouse myself," I said. "I will prepare for the duties and struggles of life and meet them like a man." I think I prayed with more sincerity and earnestness for God's blessing that night than I had done for years; and my last thought was, "I will not disappoint my mother's hopes. I will become truly good." Alas for the resolutions that are based on an occasional prayer or the shifting sands of human strength! Little knew I of the depths of my own heart or how thoroughly it needed renovation!

From that time I continued more thoughtful, entering indeed upon all the rustic sports of our village with the keenest relish as before, but nourishing within me, at the same time, better desires and more manly aims. I wished for another conversation

with my mother; but no opportunity for it offered. Indeed, I rather think she shunned it purposely, wishing to throw me on myself, that my mind might act more independently.

When I talked to my father of my plans, he contented himself with saying, "Well, I hope you will make something of yourself, Allen. I used to hope I should; but somehow life has slipped away and I'm pretty much what I was when I was a boy. My fine plans never got carried out. But perhaps it's just as well. I've had a pretty comfortable life of it, on the whole."

There was a sadness in his voice which seemed at variance with his closing words. My dear, kind father! Years have passed away since I looked upon his placid features, and very sweet and precious are the memories of his kindness and affection; but when I recall his life, and remember what he was, I cannot but feel that his talents were never fully improved. There was a want of perseverance, an indisposition to effort, about him, which prevented him from becoming any thing more than

the fond father and easy, accommodating neighbour. Yet he had fine perceptions of what was noblest and best, and, I doubt not, in earlier life, cherished aspirations which were never carried into deeds. But peace to his memory! The green sod which covers him has been watered by many honest and affectionate tears; for all who knew him loved him while living and mourned him when dead.

"You must earn your own living, my boy," he added. "I wish I had more to give you; but it has always been a hard struggle to live, and you will have to take care of yourself some way."

"I'm not sorry for that, father," I said. "I am strong and healthy, and I would not like to lie down idly upon other people. These hands" (swinging them above my head) "are stout ones, and they shall work out a fortune for me some day. I am glad I have got to make my own way in the world. I can—I *will*—make a man you will not be ashamed of,—you, nor my mother either."

"That's right, Allen: that's your mo-

ther's spirit. She was always braver than I. Be careful to follow her advice. Few sons have such a mother as your's: she's one among a thousand; and her counsels will be your safest guide."

## CHAPTER V.

### DISCONTENT.

The more carefully I examined myself the more sure I felt that something was radically wrong. I was selfish in all my plans; and I knew I ought to live for the good of others. I knew God had created me, had given me every faculty I possessed, and that he rightly claimed from me love and obedience to his commands. I knew that his requirements were all right and just,—nay, more, I believed that loving and serving him was the only road to true happiness; and yet I was conscious of an unwillingness to love and serve him. This strange contradiction between reason and inclination sometimes distressed me; but oftener I lost sight of it; and, though it lay like a dull, heavy weight upon my soul, crushing out of it all true life and joy, I talked and

laughed and thought of other things, and considered myself happy. Yet at the bottom of this superficial enjoyment I was really miserable,—or I should have been, had I dared to look myself and my condition fully in the face. There was a restless craving for something beyond my reach,—for some unattainable good which would satisfy my longings and give me peace. I had no distinct idea what it was I needed. Sometimes I thought if my lot in life were different I should be happy; and then the old discontent and fretfulness came back, and I was cross and irritable to all around me, blaming them for the misery which my own selfish heart occasioned.

One Sunday, about this time, I heard a sermon from the venerable Dr. C. which impressed me greatly. He often preached for us, having married his wife from our little village; but, though I had always admired his eloquence, I had never felt the power of truth as I did that day. The influences of the Divine Spirit must have accompanied the word preached and made it powerful.

The sermon was from the words, "Thou

shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength;" and it set forth forcibly the duty of consecrating ourselves wholly and forever to God. The reasonableness and beauty of the requirement were fully shown, as well as its adaptedness to elevate the human soul to its highest capacity for wisdom, purity and bliss, and also the sinfulness of those who refused thus to devote themselves to God's service. I had never before so clearly seen the nature of God's requirements. I saw that he asked of me nothing but to love him, who was infinitely lovely,—him, who is the source of all goodness and blessedness. It was no arbitrary law, but one proceeding from love; and obedience to it would make me —even me—like the angels above,—loving and lovely, holy and blessed. But, seeing this, did my heart joyfully devote itself to him? Knowing that his service would be one of infinite blessedness, did my soul with all its powers leap quickly forth in glad obedience? It has been said that motives placed before a human soul *must* compel it to act in accordance with them. I

know nothing of metaphysics. I only know that my soul could stand in the full blaze of motives powerful as God's love and my own eternal well-being and not yield to them. Whatever other human souls may be, mine was thus unreasonable and guilty; and from my own bitter experience is drawn my full conviction of the want of holiness in the heart of man. God's word asserts it; and I feel it to be true when I look at my own.

I shut myself up in my room that afternoon when I came home from church, not choosing to converse with any one. After an early tea, I wandered forth into the woods back of our house. It was an October evening. The leaves were falling quietly, one by one, at my feet. They had lived their life. Their work was done, and now they were passing away peacefully to moulder upon the earth. By-and-by I too should pass away. My work would be done, and I should lie down and moulder into dust. But not as the leaf passed should I go away. I had a soul that would live forever; and I was accountable for the right use of all the faculties God had given me.

This seemed a terrible truth to me. To be obliged to live forever; to bear about with me the burden of responsibility; never to be able to shake it off,—never, in this life nor in the next,—never, through all the ceaseless ages of eternity! How I wished I had been made a flower, a leaf, without any accountability!

The faint note of a quail was heard in the distant woods. It had lingered behind its fellows, and there was a quivering in its note—a tremulous, long-drawn trill—which is only heard late in autumn from some lone lingerer in the forest. To me it sounded like a wail. Was that poor bird sad and weary too? Yet he had no soul. I wished I was in his place: then I could live out my appointed time and return to nothingness; but now I could never do that,—*never!* So intense was the pain caused by this conviction that I groaned aloud. I accused God of being unjust in having made me thus. Why had he imposed upon me a life I never asked for,—a life I could never be rid of, but must drag on through this terrible FOREVER? A soft voice whispered, "It need not be a terrible

forever to any. To some it will be a joyful one. Why not to you?" But I felt that it would not. I knew my soul was not in harmony with the glorious Maker of the universe, and that therefore I must be miserable. I knew he would keep me within his power. I longed to be free from it, and could not. How could I be otherwise than wretched?

How dreary every thing looked to me! The brown stalks which had once been bright with leaves and flowers crackled beneath my feet. The dismal winds moaned through the pines, telling of coming storms and desolations. The black clouds moved in frowning masses over the gray sky. All was gloomy. Nowhere in the world without, nor in my own soul, could I behold a ray of light. I had been told a thousand times of the way of salvation. I knew perfectly well that sinners could be saved if they forsook their sins and went to Jesus and asked forgiveness; but there was no satisfaction to me in the thought. I was a sinner. I knew that; yet I did not feel sorrow for my sins. It seemed to me I could not repent,—that I should always be a

sinner. How could I be any thing else? In my misery I again impiously turned to God and accused him of injustice. Why had he not made me so that I could not sin,—so that I *must* love him?

In the indulgence of such miserable thoughts I wandered on till dark, and then turned homewards. Not feeling like seeing the family, I complained of being tired, and went immediately to my own room,—the pleasant little room where I had lain in childhood and had often looked through the looped-up curtain at the smiling stars. Now there were few stars. I sat by the window for hours, letting my thoughts drift wildly; for my soul was a perfect chaos of conflicting elements,—a chaos over which no spirit of light and love brooded.

At length I closed the window, and, wearied with the violence of my emotions, fell asleep. And the next morning? Why, the next morning, strange as it may seem, these feelings had all passed away. It had rained during the night. The clear blue sky shone brightly overhead; all nature was gay in her autumnal robes of gold and

crimson, and my heart beat in unison with the bright scene.

What had become of the misery of the previous night? I knew not, nor cared to ask. I remembered it as an oppressive dream I was glad to have shaken off, and went down-stairs whistling a merry tune.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A VISITOR.

When I entered the breakfast-room—which was also our kitchen, sitting-room and dining-room—I found the family discussing an expected arrival. "Cousin John" was coming; and, though we had plenty of cousins who came to see us, a visit from Cousin John was an event of no common interest. He had never been in Hillbury, but we had heard much about him,—more, however, from our neighbours than from our parents; and they had always represented him as a most remarkable man, who had been wonderfully successful in all his plans and was now a very wealthy merchant. He was my father's cousin, and had left his home in the country in early life, and by some means (I never heard exactly how) had become very rich, and

was now living in New York city in great splendour, as some of our neighbours said who had seen him.

Susan and I had often made him the topic of private conversation; and, putting together the little items which had reached us, our vivid imaginations colouring them all, we had elevated Cousin John, our rich New York relative, (our only one, indeed, who was not positively poor,) into a paragon of splendour and elegance. I had sometimes fancied my mother unusually silent when his name was introduced; but it might be only a fancy. At any rate, as he was coming to Hillbury on business, my father had asked him to stay with us, and he was to be with us that afternoon.

"I am *so* glad Cousin John is coming to-day," exclaimed Susan, at the breakfast-table. "I have always wanted to see him more than any one else."

"But suppose you should not like him?" suggested my mother.

"Oh, I almost know I shall! Martha Jones has seen him; and she says he is a very fine gentleman, who dresses beautifully and is *very* superior. You know he

is from the city, mother. And don't you expect I shall like a gentleman who comes all the way from New York city?"

My mother smiled, and said she was sure there were some in New York city who would not be at all agreeable to her.

"But I think he will be," said Susan. "At any rate, I am very curious to see what a city-gentleman is like. I have never seen one yet; and now that one is coming under our very roof I think it is highly proper to feel a good deal excited about it."

"I am afraid he will think this is a pretty poor place," I said,—"his own home is such a splendid one."

"Oh, I hope not," said Susan. "I shall sweep the front room till there isn't one speck of dust left in it, and rub the chairs and tables till they shine; and I am going to fill the large glass mug with laurel and the pretty maple-leaves, which are as bright as flowers. After dinner I shall dress myself in my new plaid frock, and mother will put on her best cap: sha'n't you, mother? And I think we shall look very nice, Allen, for all you shake your head so doubtfully."

"But he has such splendid furniture at home. Martha Jones said she felt almost afraid to step on the carpet when she called there, the flowers on it looked so bright and so like real roses."

"Well," said Susan, with a little sigh, "we can't do any thing more than our best for him; and if he isn't contented I shall be sorry. I hope he won't give himself airs and look down on every thing he sees."

"He certainly will not if he is a *gentleman*," said my mother, quietly.

We separated, each going to his daily task, and each, I suppose, thinking a good deal about Cousin John: at least, I did. I felt very anxious, and yet half afraid, to see him; for, having never been much from home, I attached an undue importance to every thing that came from abroad. I was very sensitive about the impression I should make on this remarkable stranger, and very much afraid I should commit some blunder and be looked upon as a green, awkward country-boy.

Susan appeared at the front door that afternoon by two o'clock, attired in her new dress, whose soft colours of blue and

brown set off her fair complexion to advantage. She was looking down the street, though the stage could not be seen coming round the corner before five o'clock at the soonest. I was in the garden, digging potatoes in my linsey-woolsey frock, and was by no means so well prepared as she for company; and when she called to me to know how soon I thought he would be coming, I answered, rather shortly,—

"Not these three hours yet, I hope."

"What must we call him, Allen, when we speak to him? Must we say 'Cousin John'?" she inquired, coming to the garden-fence.

"I'm sure I don't know. All I care for is to get off this old frock before he comes. I guess he wouldn't like to have me cousining him in this rig."

"But he will have to see you in it to-morrow, if he doesn't to-day: so what's the difference?" said Susan, laughing merrily.

"Oh, 'first impressions are every thing,' Aunt Sally says."

I laughed too; but I felt inwardly annoyed. It was true I should have to dig potatoes to-morrow and wear my old clothes;

and no doubt Cousin John would look down upon and despise me. Why was I obliged to work so hard, while he could wear broadcloth every day and live like a gentleman, without ever soiling his hands? The old pride and bitterness began to rise. I knew mother would say, "If he was a true gentleman he would think none the less of me for working and dressing according to my work;" but I knew better. Did not even the clerks in our village store feel themselves above me, just because they didn't have to soil their clothes by working? How much more a city merchant, then? It did not occur to me to ask if the clerks were *gentlemen* and their valuation of things and persons necessarily correct. I only felt, as I went on digging, that I was an ill-used member of the human family; and I was very miserable, because very discontented with myself and my condition.

About five o'clock I heard the distant rumbling of the stage-coach, and immediately rushed out of the garden and hid myself in the corn-house till the dreaded visitor should have gone in. It must be

remembered that I was only in my seventeenth year, and had not mingled with the world enough to know that in order to be respected one must respect himself. I peeped out through the cracks (manly boy that I was!) to get a glimpse of this formidable cousin. I saw my father standing at the gate in his shirt-sleeves and straw hat, as calm as if he had been in his Sunday-coat, and wondered he could be so self-possessed. It was but a single look that I caught of Cousin John; but that convinced me he was even more showy and city-like in his appearance than I had expected. He had a pompous, bustling manner of getting down from the stage which I considered very elegant and imposing; for then to me "all was gold that glittered."

I hurried to finish my day's work, carefully keeping out of sight from the front-room windows, and then hastened into the kitchen, stepping softly lest I should be discovered. I heard a loud voice talking with my father in the best room, while my mother and Susan were in the kitchen busy about the tea.

"Tell me, Susan, how do you like him?"

I said, drawing her out into the wood-shed and speaking in a whisper.

"Oh, I don't know. He isn't at all like what I expected or like any one we know. But one thing I must tell you, Allen: we are not to call him 'Cousin John.' Mother says he is so much older than we are it is more proper to say 'Mr. Mather.' But you and I sha'n't have to say much to him. He talks to father all the time."

"Hasn't he said any thing to you?"

"Only when he first came in: then he said, 'So this is your little daughter? Nice girl!'—as if I were about four years old."

"Who would have thought of your being so proud, Sue? It's all because you have got on a new dress!" And I laughed heartily.

"Hush, children!" said my mother. "I want Susan to set the table; and you will have no more time, Allen, than you will need to change your dress."

I took special pains to brush my hair off my forehead in a striking manner and to tie my cravat and turn over my collar properly; but, after all, when I was obliged to enter the room I felt as coarse and clumsy and awkward as possible.

"This is my son Allen, Mr. Mather," said my father.

"Ah, indeed! How do you do? Why, I had no idea you had such a tall son as this." And he shook my hand heartily and then continued his conversation with my father, speaking, as he had to me, in a very loud tone, as if we were all a little deaf.

Colouring up to the roots of my hair, I awkwardly sought a seat, and, after having run against the table, settled down behind the door,—from which retreat, after I had recovered my self-composure, I examined Cousin John. He was a large, portly man of about forty, with a very full face and florid complexion. He was showily dressed, displaying a vast amount of shirt-bosom and yellow vest, across which an immensely heavy watch-chain was suspended so as to show to the best advantage. He gave one the idea of occupying a great deal of space. Our little room (which I had never thought of as small before) seemed to have shrunk into half its usual size now he was in it; and he looked crowded, though seated in our largest rocking-chair. He spoke in a sharp, ringing tone, very loud and very dic-

tatorially, as if there were no appeal from his decisions. As I heard him enlarging upon Wall Street and brokers and stocks, and other business-matters of which I had never heard before, I felt as if he was the wisest of men, and as if all common knowledge, such as mine, was of no kind of value. That he had little reverence for book-knowledge was evident from the contemptuous glance he cast on our book-shelf as he passed out to tea. This little collection had always been the pride of our hearts, and few had passed it without praise.

"Books are well enough, I suppose, in a country place like this," he said, in a tone which implied that they were quite beneath his notice; "but men—*men* are what we ought to study. Till a person knows something of men,—life, business-life,—he can't be really said to know any thing at all."

How diminutive our little table looked as he drew himself up to it! I think Susan felt as I did,—that "our best" (for we had our finest homespun damask and our nicest cups and saucers on,—which we had always thought quite elegant before) was something very despicable in his eyes. I felt intensely

mortified at our poverty, which seemed so much greater than it had ever seemed before, and kept silently contrasting our little kitchen with his magnificent parlour, where the carpet looked too good to step upon! He had a condescending way of praising our country fare; and his "Ah, very nice! very nice!" evidently implied, "Very nice for you here in the country, but nothing to what I am accustomed to."

I wondered how my mother could preserve her usual quiet manner. It seems strange to me now that I could not see how infinitely superior was her repose and gentle dignity to his pompous parade of manner, —how much more truly refined and elegant it was. Refinement,—elegance: how sadly are these words misunderstood and misapplied! I blush now to think of my folly; but then it all appeared so differently. Even the yellow vest and the paraded watch-chain I considered marks of a gentleman; and I gazed at them with envious admiration,—so foolish was I and ignorant of true gentility. All the apology I can make for this blindness is that I had never been from home, and had had no opportunity of learning that

vulgarity and pretension are usually found together.

That evening, as we sat in the best room, (we never dreamed of calling it *the parlour* in those days,) I was an eager listener to all Cousin John's narratives of city adventures and city follies. They were all exciting,—delightful to me, and I wondered how Susan could gape as she bent over her knitting-work. This kind of narrative appealed to the restless element in my nature and quickened it into new activity. I could not sleep that night for thinking of the charms of a city life, where all was bustle and excitement, and of the wretchedness of dragging out a stupid, dead-and-alive existence in the country.

What had become of my serious convictions that God's law was good and had a rightful authority over my heart and life? Were they all forgotten? No, not entirely: for, amid all the brilliant visions which flitted before my eyes that night, the thought of God's requirements came with a stinging force which made me thrust them back again. I chose to consign them to darkness and oblivion; for they were black

shadows, disfiguring all the hopes I indulged of a happy future. Neither would I listen to the gentle voice which sought entrance to my soul,—a voice that assured me I should be unhappy if all the treasures of the world were mine, because I was made for something better,—a voice which told of higher joys than those I was coveting so eagerly. Sweet breathings of the Spirit upon the night and chaos of my soul! why were they not listened to? Why did I not admit the glorious light of heaven to irradiate my miserable darkness?

I had blamed the great Author of my being for not having created me incapable of sinning; yet I was rejecting every attempt he made to win me back to purity and blessedness, and clinging to the very sinfulness and misery I professed to desire to be freed from so earnestly! He would have loosed the chains that bound me, but I hugged them closer around my soul. He would have filled my soul with peace and joy such as the world could never give, but I turned from them to the beggarly elements, the vile husks, of earthly pleasure. I silenced the heavenly voices and fell

asleep, to live over again in my dreams the alluring scenes which had been presented to my view.

The next day Cousin John was absent till late in the afternoon, attending to the business which had brought him to Hillbury. So I wore my old frock and dug potatoes without being seen by his contemptuous eyes. But, for all that, I was not happy. I was in an excited state of mind; and over and over again during the day I said to myself, "I will leave this old farm,—this mean, miserable place. I will never slave here another year, hoeing and digging in the dirt. I will see if I can't be somebody in the world." The way to my doing this now seemed clear to me. I would go to New York. There was where Cousin John had made himself a rich and happy man. I would rise there as well as he,—perhaps become at his age what he was now. I would find courage to ask him what I could do there. Perhaps he would assist me; and possibly he might take me into his employment. How delightful that would be!

I again arrayed myself in my best suit

and went in to hear more of his inspiring conversation. Soon after tea, he turned to me abruptly and said,—

"Allen,—that's your name, I think,—what are you going to do with yourself? You seem too likely a chap to stay on the old place always."

Blushing with pleasure even at this coarse compliment, I said,—

"I do not know, sir. I mean to leave Hillbury, but have not decided where I shall go."

"How would you like to go to the city, boy? That's the place to make something of yourself. Plenty to do there of all kinds of work. What *can* you do? Write a good hand?"

"Tolerably fair, sir," I said. The truth was, I prided myself on writing well.

"Good in figures?"

"I have been through the arithmetic three times; and the last time I did every sum in it." And I coloured at thus praising myself.

"Well, well, you seem a pretty forward, active sort of a lad. Sometimes boys from the country get rubbed down and make

the smartest kind of business-men. I came from the country myself. I reckon you could find something to do. I don't know but we might find employment for such a slip of a boy in our office. Plenty of work there of one kind and another."

I cannot describe the emotions that these few words excited. I fairly trembled with delight; but, making an effort to be calm, I inquired,—

"What would you wish me to do, sir?"

"Oh, I shouldn't want you to be too scrupulous about your work. I should expect you to do just what we wanted. Sometimes running about the city, sometimes making out bills, sometimes one thing and sometimes another."

How magnificent it sounded in my ears! To think of being a clerk to the firm of Ostrander, Mather & Co., 156 —— Street, New York! It made the blood fairly race through my veins. My father had said nothing during this conversation, and just then my mother entered, and, taking her sewing, sat down by the little table.

"I have been speaking to your son about going to New York to live. That's the

place to make a man of him. You shouldn't keep him buried in the country,—such a smart, active lad as he seems to be."

"We should not like to trust him quite so far from us," said my mother, without raising her eyes. "He is our only son, you know."

"Oh, I dare say; mothers always feel such things a little at first. But you would soon get used to having him away; and when he came back, a well-to-do city gentleman, making a dash about Hillbury, you'd feel very proud of him, Mrs. Richmond,—very proud, and very glad you didn't keep him tied to your apron-string."

"We shall be in no haste to decide about his future occupation," replied my mother. "He will certainly remain at home till spring."

"Why, I didn't know but we would take him into our concern," said Cousin John, as if of course that would be irresistible: "not that he would be of much use to us yet a while, but for relation's sake, you know; and in time he might get made over and be worth something. Always plenty to do in such a great concern: occupy half

a dozen green hands well enough one way and another."

Too well I knew by my mother's face that she would oppose my going; and, God forgive me for it! but there rose up in my heart at the moment something akin to hatred towards her,—towards her, my gentle, patient mother!

"We will think about it, Cousin John," said my father, pleasantly. "We are much obliged to you for your kind offer; but an only son, you know, can't be disposed of suddenly."

Little more was said upon the subject, and the next morning Cousin John left us. His last words to me were, "Good-by, my boy. You had better make up your mind to come to New York by-and-by. We'll be sure and give you a place and a welcome any time."

What bewildering visions of life in a city —that great unknown land of promise— passed before my vision after he had gone! Life among all that was showy and attractive; life where there would be no more drudgery to do, no more digging potatoes or wearing linsey-woolsey frocks; life as a

spruce, well-dressed clerk, an object of envy and admiration to all the boys in Hillbury! Ah, what delicious pictures of such a life floated through my imagination, throwing me into a kind of delirious trance, from which I almost feared to be awakened! And yet it was not all imagination: there was a solid reality now for my dreams to rest upon,—dreams as fair and beautiful as I had heretofore indulged in without a hope of their becoming true.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OPPOSITION.

THAT evening I had a long conversation with my mother concerning my new plans. As I had foreseen, she objected to my going. A large city, she said, was a dangerous place for an inexperienced, sanguine youth, full of temptations such as I had never dreamed of,—a place where some rose to prosperity and eminence, but where many went down to poverty, vice and ruin. She could not consent to my running such a hazard under no protection but Cousin John's, who was not in all respects such a guide as she could wish. She must, she said, do all in her power to surround me with good influences, and leave the result to a higher Power; but she should not feel that she had done right if she did not oppose a plan which seemed to her so full of

danger—so liable to injure if not ruin me—as this did.

"But Cousin John," I said, "was not ruined. He had been successful; and why might I not do as well as he?"

"And would you be satisfied to be just what Cousin John is?" she asked, looking into my eyes with her clear glance.

I was astonished at the question. "Why, mother, he is so wealthy and lives in such a splendid house and does such an extensive business. Besides, he knows so much and is such a gentleman. Perhaps I cannot ever expect to be all he is; but I might make a good business-man after I was 'all made over,' as he says."

"I hope, Allen, you will never be '*made over*' in his meaning of the words," said my mother, sadly. "He is an intensely worldly man, and to the acquisition of wealth and a certain standing in society he has sacrificed every thing. Being 'made over' with him means giving up every noble aspiration, every home-attachment and all the sweet simplicity of your youthful nature, and becoming a shrewd, unfeeling man, willing to take every advantage of those you deal

with, and letting nothing—no affection or principle—come between you and a good bargain. This is the life he has led; and it is the last one I should choose for you. I do hope something better for you, my son," she added, in a tone of heartfelt tenderness.

But her earnest words did not affect my heart. Uncle John's visit seemed to have called out all that was evil in my nature, and the better part of it was lying in subjection. I said I was sure she was unjust to Cousin John, and added, bitterly,—

"You are never willing I should do as I want to. You always oppose me."

I had never spoken to my mother in that tone before. She looked astonished, —grieved. She did not speak at once, but at length said, quietly,—

"*Why* do I oppose you, Allen? What do you suppose are my motives for differing from you as I do?"

I did not answer; and she said, "It always gives me pain to be compelled to do it; but, because it pains me and pains you, I must not weakly neglect to do my duty. If I saw you going blindfold towards a precipice, I should pull you back, if it did hurt

you and though you were ever so anxious to keep on and sure you were walking in a safe and pleasant path. How much more now, when I fear you are rushing blindly into the greatest danger!"

If any thing could have softened me, it would have been the perfect sweetness of my mother's manner. But an evil spirit had entered into me, and nothing soothed, —every thing irritated me.

"You know little about the world," I said. "Women never do. I am not a boy now, but a man; and I can't be kept in leading-strings. I know that men go into the city and become wealthy and distinguished; and why may not I? I know I could make something of myself if everybody didn't do all they could to hold me back and pin me down at home. But I am determined I *will* go, at all events. Here is a good offer; and I won't lose the only chance I may ever have of becoming something decent just because other people have so many whims."

Oh, the intense selfishness, the injustice and cruelty, of this speech! I knew it was brutal; but I would not heed the voice of

conscience, which loudly remonstrated. My pride was in the ascendant, and I would not yield a hair's-breadth to the better emotion which struggled to gain a power within me.

"We had better not talk of this any more to-night," my mother said, and left the room. I shall never forget her look as she rose to go, were I to live a hundred years! It was a look so full of pain, yet so free from anger; such a look as the seraph Raphael might have turned on Eve when she plucked the forbidden fruit! But my wilful heart would not heed it,—would heed nothing but its own impetuous passions. Over and over again I said to myself, "I must stand up for my rights. It is proper I should. Everybody who has become distinguished has had to fight with opposition at the outset. If I submit now I shall always have to submit. When my mother finds I am firm she will yield; and years hence, when I have succeeded,—which I shall, and without becoming hardened, either,—she will be glad I did not listen to her; she will rejoice in my perseverance and be proud of me." And the pleasant conviction that I was playing a

heroic and manly part sustained me. In vain did the sweet voices from a better world seek to gain entrance to my soul that night. From the faintest tone of self-reproach or penitence, from every pleading of love or sorrow, I turned away almost fiercely. "I was not a baby," I said to myself. "I was a man, and would show myself one by carrying my point beyond all opposition." And I dwelt again, enchanted, upon the pleasures of the life before me. It would give scope for all my energies. I was active rather than studious in my habits, and I should be sure to succeed; and my last waking thoughts were of myself returning to my native village some five years hence with such a vest and watch-chain and lordly mien as Cousin John's, and creating a great sensation by walking through the streets.

The next day, as I was husking corn with my father, I sounded him with regard to the plan, and found he was not so entirely opposed to it as my mother. It seemed to him a pretty good opening for a young man. To-be-sure, Cousin John was not so particular about some things; but he had

a business-tact and was now well settled. New York was a wicked place; but he hoped I had been so trained that I should not be led away by its temptations. He advised me to be in no hurry about deciding, and by no means to act in opposition to my mother's wishes.

That evening I had another conversation with my mother. I could not bring myself exactly to apologize for my undutiful manner last evening; but I said that I was sorry to give her pain and that I was sure she meant to consult my best good, (the self-conceited coxcomb that I was!) but that the more I reflected upon it the more I felt certain I had better go to New York in the spring. I told her my father, I was sure, if left to form his own views, would give his consent; and therefore it would be right in me to go.

My mother was grave, but, as usual, very calm. I again remarked that I thought she was prejudiced against Cousin John,—as if I could judge character better than she!

"I must tell you more of Cousin John's history than I intended to," she replied, "for I hoped your wish to go to him would

have passed away. But, as your feeling seems such an earnest one, I must do my best to enlighten you with regard to him.

"He began his career at sixteen, as a pedlar, with two tin boxes slung over his back, leaving a widowed mother at home and three younger sisters. He was then an active, self-willed boy, discontented with home and anxious to free himself from its restraints. He was determined to become rich, and sacrificed every thing to that passion. He must have had a natural tact for money-making; for all his speculations—of which he entered into many—proved successful, and in ten years he had greatly enlarged his operations. About that time he drew a prize in a lottery, which he invested in a small dry-goods store in New York. From that he went on from step to step till he became a merchant on quite an extensive scale, entering into a partnership with one or two others and beginning to live very expensively and showily, having married a lady from the city. In the mean time, his mother and sisters remained as poor as ever,—not literally suffering from want, but labouring hard and practising

the most rigid economy. After a time, the dashing firm to which he belonged failed, owing very heavy debts to numerous creditors, who could find very little property to satisfy their claims. A settlement was effected in a few months, by which the firm obtained a discharge by paying twenty cents on the dollar. Within a year from that time, Cousin John turned up in Baltimore, once more a merchant, on a larger scale than ever. He came on to make his country friends a visit, parading his fine broadcloth and gold watch-chains much after his present fashion, and riding about the country with his wife and children in a fine carriage with a pair of horses, creating quite a sensation. It is but justice to him to say that at that time he made some provision for his mother,—by no means a liberal one, but which secured her from want during the remainder of her life."

"What had become of the younger sisters?" I asked.

"The oldest had married a respectable farmer in the neighbourhood; the second, who had supported herself by housework, had sickened and died; and the youngest

of them continued with her mother, and took in sewing. This was about ten years ago. Since then I have heard very little about him. I know that he failed again in Baltimore, getting a discharge from his creditors by paying a small proportion of his debts, and that he afterwards began business as a commission-merchant in New York, living very extravagantly and having the appearance of great wealth."

"And is he not wealthy?" I asked.

"I do not know. If he has property in his possession, it rightfully belongs to his creditors,—though they cannot legally claim it. He has no right to be a wealthy man.

"You will now understand, Allen, why I am unwilling you should be in any way associated with him or become what he is. I do not consider him an honest man, or in any sense of the word a gentleman. He makes great pretensions, which may impose upon some ignorant minds; but a true gentleman is always modest and unassuming. Why, Allen, I would rather see you the poorest man in Hillbury, earning your bread by the most menial toil, provided you were honest, than such a man as

Cousin John is, living in splendour. If poor and honest, I could still be proud of you; but it would break my heart if you should lose your integrity, even if you were ever so prosperous. No right-minded person can feel any respect for a man who defrauds his creditors and himself revels in costly luxuries."

"Do you think *I* would become dishonest if I were in his employment? No, indeed! I would not do a mean, dishonourable thing for any man, be he whom he might." And I drew myself up with the pride of a boy who is always certain *he* shall come out of the fiery furnace of temptation unscathed and triumphant, little knowing that, unless One in the likeness of the Son of God walk beside him there, he will inevitably perish in the flames.

"You little know yourself, my child, or the disguises in which vice masks herself. I know every thing dishonest is abhorrent to you now; but you are no better than many others who have fallen a prey to evil practices who once felt as sure of their integrity as you do now. You have never been tried; you have been shielded from

evil and surrounded by good influences from your cradle; yet you would now cast these restraints all aside and plunge into the wildest whirlpool of temptation, totally ignorant of your danger and of your weakness."

"Yes, I would!" I said, impetuously. "I would try my strength and find if I have any character or not. What shall I ever be good for till I have battled with temptation? Nothing but a poor, weak simpleton! But mothers," I added, "always feel so. If they had the direction, no son would ever make any thing of himself. Women are always timid.'

"And you are brave and wise enough to see that your mother is a poor, weak, despicable creature, whose opinions are of little value!" There was an expression of anguish on my mother's face; but it soon passed away, and she said, quietly,

"I must make allowances for boyish impetuosity. You do not mean all you say, Allen; and the time will come when you will know a mother's love and counsels are worth something in a world like this."

Ah, yes, dear, sainted mother! I *have*

learned to feel it. Oh, how deeply, how sorrowfully! If ever thy purified spirit beholds thy wandering child, thou seest that at last the reckless, ungrateful boy has learned to value that mother's love as the richest gift God could bestow upon him, and that he fain would weep tears of bitter penitence upon thy breast and breathe into thine ear the confession no earthly listener may hear! Ah, why do sorrow and penitence so often come too late?

## CHAPTER IX.

### LEAVING HOME.

A FEW weeks passed away,—a few miserable weeks, in which a bitter struggle between good and evil was going on within me. There are many kinds of sorrow in this life, many heart-crushing trials; but among them all I do not believe there is one so bitter, so wretched, as that produced by the conflict between one's own convictions of duty and an unwillingness to perform it. Hide it as we may from all human eyes, overlay it with light jests or business-cares as we will, till we lose all distinct consciousness of it ourselves, still, the misery is there, like a worm gnawing silently and steadily at the root of all our peace. How many bear this heavy burden through a weary lifetime! How many must bear it

more wearily still through the unending future!

Susan had left home directly after Cousin John's departure, to spend the winter with an aunt who needed her assistance, and I missed her bright face and the birdlike music of her voice, which used to have power at times to charm away the evil spirit from my breast. My mother seldom sung now; her step was slower about the house and less firm; and a careful observer might have seen that her health was gradually giving way. But she was always cheerful and thoughtful of others, and my selfish heart dreamed of no coming shadows.

About New Year's day, a letter arrived from Cousin John, making a direct proposal for me to come to him immediately, as one of his young men had gone. He would give me employment, board me in his own family and pay me fifty dollars the first year. Now the question must be decided at once. My mother looked very grave, and repeated to my father and to me her objections,—serious enough, one would have thought, to have influenced us both; but it was evident my father rather favoured

the idea, and I was eager and determined to go at all hazards. I was so infatuated that if the consent of my parents had been withheld I certainly should have run away. Seeing the state of my mind, my mother yielded. If I went, I should take with me a mother's blessing. Yet in my heart I knew I was giving her extreme pain and that I was really a disobedient child; but the excitement of preparing for my departure crowded such thoughts out of my mind. Our merchant, Mr. Reed, was going to New York in two weeks; and it was decided I should go with him. I blush now to think of the sacrifices which were made by those loving parents to add to my little outfit,—sacrifices made cheerfully and received by me as a matter of course, so thoroughly selfish had I grown.

But when the hour came for parting, when Susan, who had come home to say good-by, clung sobbing to my neck, when my father uttered his fervent "God bless you, my boy!" and my mother folded me to her heart with a passionate grief too deep for words or tears, my pride gave way. I was the Allen of former days, the

loving, trusting boy. I really wished at that moment that I had never decided to leave them. I promised over and over, amid fast-falling tears, to write very often, to tell them every thing, to remember all their counsels, to be all they could wish.

The stage came, and I was gone! Gone from the quiet old homestead; gone from the hearts that loved me as no other hearts could; gone, leaving the peaceful past all behind me, to launch out anew on the great sea of life!

The exhilaration produced by riding in the frosty air revived my spirits, and I again looked eagerly into the future. I felt that I was beginning life anew; and, in the fervour of my boyish heart, I determined it should be an upright, noble life, such as my parents would never blush to look upon. I would become worthy of them,—their pride and joy. I felt sorrow at having grieved my mother, and would tell her so when I wrote; but I said, "The future shall richly atone for the past. She shall not only forgive, but rejoice in, this separation."

It is with peculiar emotion I look back

upon this point in my history. When I see that boy of seventeen going forth alone into the world, so sanguine of success and yet so reckless and so ignorant of all he needed to know, I can but wonder that he was saved from utter ruin. It was only because an unseen Presence went forth with him to guard and protect him that he did not plunge into follies from which he could never have extricated himself. Yet the reckless, self-relying boy asked and wished for no such guidance. God be praised that a mother's prayers in his behalf were heard and answered!

In due time we reached New York; and for the first time I was in a city, amid its bewildering brilliancy, its hurrying masses of human beings, its Babel-like and ceaseless roar, which to me, who knew not a single soul among that busy throng, was more solemn and lonely than even the roar of the great ocean. I shall never forget the feeling of isolation—of being swallowed up and lost in that vast, all-devouring whole—which came over me as I walked up Broadway for the first time. At a hotel where Mr. Reed stopped, I left my little wooden

trunk and received such directions as enabled me to find Mr. Mather's residence.

It was late in the evening when I stood on the steps of my cousin's dwelling,—a large house, with a fine stone front, in a fashionable street. How insignificant I felt amid those piles of brick and mortar towering so high above me! My courage had gone, and I trembled like a criminal as I stood there under the light of the street-lamps trying to gather resolution to ring the door-bell. At last I gave the large knob a pull. I had never rung a bell before, and had no idea how the feat was to be accomplished; but my effort brought a well-dressed man to the door, to whom I said, "How do you do, sir?" in the most respectful manner. He smiled, and when I inquired for Mr. Mather told me he was not at home, and then looked as if he expected me to go away. What should I do? I ventured to inquire for Mrs. Mather, telling him, in a confidential manner, that I was their cousin from Hillbury and had come to stay with them. With another smile he ushered me into the parlour,—a room far more magnificent than I had ever

dreamed of. As he turned on the gas it flashed up into a radiance like that of some fairy-palace, quite dazzling my inexperienced eyes. Sure enough, the carpet did look too good to step on and the chairs and sofas too elegant to sit upon. After some hesitation, I settled myself on a low stool covered with beautiful needlework, and carefully surveyed the room. Then, not feeling quite sure it was designed for a seat, I removed myself to a chair, which, though so elegantly covered, I was certain must be made to sit on, and with a palpitating heart awaited Mrs. Mather's entrance. Opposite me was a very large splendid mirror, in which I could see myself from head to foot; and, oh, what a sorry figure I cut there in my home-made garments, which in Hillbury I thought so very nice!

I was filled with mortification, and could have fairly cried, such an intense longing that moment came over me to be at home in the good old-fashioned kitchen where I was known and loved, and where I was sure my mother and Susan were then quietly sitting, perhaps talking of me affectionately.

The entrance of Mrs. Mather recalled me to the present. She was a delicate, lady-like-looking person, whose pleasant voice reminded me of my mother's. She spoke very kindly, said Mr. Mather expected me, and inquired about my journey and my home. In half an hour her husband came in. As he said, "How d'ye do?" in his usual boisterous manner, he gave a sharp glance over my person, which made me feel still more ashamed of myself.

"Glad you've come, my boy. We must get you fixed up a little, and make a spruce New Yorker of you one of these days. Good stout Yankee lad,—eh, wife?"

Mrs. Mather smiled and asked how old I was. Then they entered into conversation, in which I took no part, till Mrs. Mather said she was sure I must be tired and would like to go to bed. She placed her hand on a beautiful crimson tassel on the wall, and in a moment the same man I had seen at the door entered.

"John, show Mr. Allen to his room,—the one over the dining-room."

After saying good-night and leaving the room awkwardly, I followed John up a

long, steep flight of stairs richly carpeted, then through a hall, where he lighted a small lamp, then down some steps into a smaller hall, where, opening a door and saying, "This is your room," he left me. Every thing looked very elegant to my country eyes; but when I had shut the door and was fairly alone I felt dreary and homesick enough. It seemed an age since yesterday morning, when I stood at the door of the dear old cottage. How far, far away every familiar object was! Even the omission of family prayers gave me an added feeling of bereavement. I had never before gone to bed without them; and, little as I had valued them at the time, I now felt as if I had not only got beyond the reach of all earthly friends, but even, as it were, of God himself; and, strangely enough, this thought saddened me inexpressibly.

The next morning the clock of a church near by struck seven as I woke. My first thought was that it thundered; but, on recovering my senses a little, I remembered where I was, and knew that strange, unearthly sound was but the roar of that great

sea of human life which was now surging around me. All was dark; and when I raised the window and threw back the shutter I could see nothing but a dense fog, through which loomed up a blank brick wall. Again I thought of home with a longing heart; but I had slept off my fatigue, and my spirits rose as I remembered what lay before me. Even if life in New York did not look so charming as it had in the distance, I would try it, and would carry into it a stout, brave heart, meeting trials, if they came, as a man should meet them. My mother's lessons were not quite lost upon me, though I had been so recreant of late.

A first day in New York must of course be a wonderful one to a country lad. I went directly after breakfast with Mr. Mather (I no longer thought of him as Cousin John) to his place of business,—the veritable 156 —— Street. It was a chilly day, very dark, and slightly raining. The warehouse was dim and dingy in every part, and the little back-room where I was taken as my place of work required to be lighted before we could see to do any thing.

The light only served to disclose its dreary aspect. There was a vile odour of coal-gas and smoke and city-filth generally, which was most offensive to my senses, accustomed to the purity of country-air. I confessed to myself this was different from what I had pictured New York life; but I had not been trained to be fastidious, and I resolved little things should not annoy me.

Mr. Mather had told me as we came down that the firm dealt in manufactured cotton of various kinds. They received immense quantities from manufacturers in New England,—principally from Rhode Island,—and sold them at wholesale, receiving a certain percentage on the sales as their commission. Several individuals were in the different rooms, all exceedingly busy — too busy to notice me — and all apparently perfectly acquainted with their business. I only was ignorant; and I felt myself a stupid dunce. As Mr. Mather had said, book-knowledge was of no use here. I knew the names and meaning of nothing around me; and this gave me a mortifying sense of degradation. If New

York does little else for a country-lad puffed up with a sense of his own importance, it does take the conceit out of him.

Mr. Mather was kind enough, but he had little time to waste on me. Consigning me to a thin, sallow-visaged man whom he called Page, he left me, saying,—

"Do as you're told, and bother nobody by asking questions."

"Page"—a middle-aged man (the head book-keeper, as I afterwards ascertained)—moved to give me a place beside him at a long desk where he was standing, and, putting a pen in my hand, asked for a specimen of my handwriting. With a trembling hand, I wrote *Allen Richmond, Hillbury*, as nicely as I could.

"Pretty fair," said Mr. Page, looking at it very carefully. "You may copy these papers," taking down a huge folio from a shelf above him and laying it before me, and also a large bundle of papers numbered A, B, C, &c. "We want duplicates of these. Begin with A, and copy it into the book with perfect accuracy. If you make the slightest mistake, even of a letter

or a separating-point, tell me: don't slip it by thinking it's of no consequence."

Mr. Page had a wiry, ill-natured voice; but I determined to do my best to please him. I began to copy the papers,—clumsily enough, I dare say, but energetically and carefully. If I made a mistake I immediately informed Mr. Page of it, in a low but distinct voice, and he showed me how to remedy it. If it was a serious error, the leaf was cut out and I began at the top of another page. Hour after hour I stood at that desk, scarcely lifting my eyes, till my head grew dizzy. The outside roar, the unusual confinement and the stifled atmosphere, all conspired to give me a torturing headache and wretched nausea. At last, to my great joy, Mr. Mather came.

"How does my green hand get on, Page?"

"Much like all new-beginners," he grumbled,—adding, in a lower tone, "Plagues of my life, all of 'em."

"Let me see your hand, boy." (How I wished Mr. Mather would not always call me "boy," or "green hand," or some such demeaning appellation!) He glanced over

the book. "Rather uneven lines, to-be-sure; but you'll learn, you'll learn: nothing like trying."

So no word of commendation reached my longing ear as a reward for the six hours of faithful, wearying labour. A clock struck two as we passed into the street. What a pleasant change it was into the open air,—even the air of a narrow New York street in a rainy day! Yet what scenes of indescribable filth and misery met my eye as we passed silently on, turning corner after corner! My heart ached for others as well as for myself; for at that moment New York seemed to me like one great charnel-house, where all light and beauty, hope and joy, lay buried "a thousand fathoms deep."

We sat down to dinner; but I could not eat. Mrs. Mather noticed it, and said something in a kind, motherly voice which went to my heart.

"Pooh! don't make a baby of him, Jane. If you are weak yourself, you needn't spoil other folks."

These words were uttered in the most contemptuous, disagreeable tone imaginable. Poor and rude as my country home

had been, I had never heard in it any thing so ungentlemanly as that speech and tone.

The meal was an uncomfortable one to me, though served up very handsomely, with a man-servant in attendance. How gladly would I have exchanged the servants, silver plate, cut glass and costly dishes for a dinner of herbs *and love therewith!*

Soon after three we returned to the store, and I wrote again till six, when, being told I could do what I pleased till seven, the tea-hour, I went into the street. While a little doubtful in what direction to turn my steps, a young man, about my own age, whom I had seen in the store during the day, joined me.

"You'll get lost," he said, in a supercilious, disagreeable tone, "if you run about the city alone, Mr. Country-boy: so you must take me for your company."

"I choose to go alone," I said, drawing myself up indignantly. "If you are going this way, I will turn and go the other."

"Not so fast, Mr. Spitfire: you needn't steam up so fast. I'm as good company as you'll find here. I'm going into Broadway;

and you'll like to see the sights there, I know. Come along, and I'll tell you all about them."

As his tone had changed into one of familiar cordiality, and as I really did want to see Broadway, I kept on, though not much fancying my companion.

What a new world of light and splendour burst upon my eyes as we turned into Broadway lighted up by gas! At first my senses were so completely bewildered, so wrapped in enchantment, I could perceive nothing clearly; but by degrees I began to see, and, but for the fear of Harry Dawson's ridicule, I believe I should have burst out into audible exclamations of delight.

Such splendid jewelry, such glittering silver plate, such magnificent silks, such lovely pictures, such piles of confectionery, such worlds of every thing new and dazzling, —oh, it was all like having fairy-tales come true! What would I not have given to have had Susan with me to see every thing that was strange and pretty! On and on we went, discovering something still more wonderful, till the clock of one of the great stone churches tolled out seven and re-

minded me I ought to be at home. But I spent a glorious hour, such as can come but once in a lifetime. Scenes more wonderful may greet the eye in after-years; but they will not awaken the vivid delight, the fresh, virgin rapture, which thrilled the bosom of the boy. New York was all I had expected,—nay, vastly more enchanting and splendid than my brightest dream had pictured it. My spirit was stirred by all the brilliancy and activity around me as by a strain of martial music; and I looked with a more ineffable contempt than ever upon the dulness of the country, and rejoiced at the prospect before me.

Harry Dawson was himself a curiosity to me, he was so wholly unlike any young man I had ever seen. I was half irritated by his reckless, impertinent way of talking; but his intimate acquaintance with the city, and the easy familiarity with which he spoke of things which filled me with astonishment, gave him a certain superiority in my eyes, while the light-hearted, comical way in which he enlightened while he laughed at my ignorance amused me.

I found he was the only young person

beside myself in the employment of "our firm," and that, like me, he sometimes wrote at the desk and sometimes went about the city on errands. As we went homewards I ventured to ask a good many questions I had not dared to put to Mr. Mather. With a shrewd insight into character and a volubility of tongue which none but a city-boy ever possesses, he sketched for me the different members of the establishment, giving such absurd pictures of them all, from Mr. Ostrander, the senior, to Tim McCarthy, the porter, that, though they were evidently caricatures, I laughed heartily,—even at my own portrait, which he certainly made ludicrous enough.

"Why, Richmond, you are a better fellow than I took you for. When you got into such a huff at first, I thought you was mighty countrified and thin-skinned." So saying, he turned into the street where he lodged, and I pursued my way alone to Mr. Mather's.

## CHAPTER X.

### LIFE IN NEW YORK.

This first day was a pretty fair sample of my life in New York for the next three months. The waking-up to the dreary look-out on the blank brick wall; the breakfast, at which Mrs. Mather was usually pale and silent and her husband engrossed by his newspaper; the hurried walk to —— Street, sometimes through mud and slush and drizzling sleet, sometimes under a bright sky and with an exhilarating breeze from the salt water new-stringing every nerve; the five or six hours' weary confinement at the desk; the dinner, always genteel, and yet somehow lacking the full relish of the humble meal at home; the walk back; the three hours' longer writing; and then the ramble round the city till tea-time,—after which came writing letters

home, or reading, or, much oftener, a stroll into some hitherto unexplored quarter with Harry Dawson and some of his companions as my guides.

Of the business-affairs of the firm, or the manner in which they were conducted, I knew very little. Mr. Ostrander, the senior partner, had gone to the South to negotiate for the sale of goods there, and in his absence Mr. Mather was at the head of affairs. I sometimes heard him engaged in the next room in an angry altercation with Mr. Ostrander the younger,—a brother of the absent partner, and himself a member of the firm,—but I was totally ignorant of the nature of their differences. Mr. Page was the head book-keeper, and I had been established as his clerk. My fine hand, on which I had prided myself so much, was in some sense a misfortune to me; for it confined me entirely to the desk, while Harry Dawson, who wrote miserably, was sent on all the out-of-door errands. I tried to perform the duties expected of me faithfully, and was well treated by all with whom I came in contact; for, though Mr. Page was irritable, he was not on the whole an un-

reasonable man, and my efforts to please him were tolerably successful. Under his instructions I learned the forms of business-papers and the neatest way of executing them; but my part of the labour was merely mechanical, and to me unspeakably wearisome. It was more disagreeable than digging potatoes under the open heavens had ever been, though I had rid myself of the linsey-woolsey frock.

There was no particular hardship in this life: few clerks have so easy a time; for, though I often ached in every limb before the day's task was done, I was not over-worked; and, instead of taking my meals where I could, and being crowded into a miserable lodging-room at night, as are most young men of my condition, I was received into Mr. Mather's family and kindly treated by them. Mr. Mather was a violent-tempered man; but he usually vented his ill-nature on his wife when at home and on Mr. Page when at the store, so that I had no cause of complaint; and Mrs. Mather was uniformly kind and considerate. I became sincerely attached to her; and, as her husband was often away till

a late hour at night, I sat up and read aloud to her, or talked of my mother and sister and my dear country home,—topics most delightful to me and apparently pleasant to her, for she was never tired of asking me about the country and our mode of life there.

"Your mother must have been an uncommon woman," she said to me one evening, "and very particular in the training of her children. Why, when Mr. Mather first told me you were coming, I figured to myself a coarse, boisterous, up-country lad, who would talk through his nose, pick his teeth with a fork and spit on the carpet, and I decided to have you take your meals downstairs with John; and, if I had not accidentally seen you that first evening and changed my impression, you would have lived down there, and I should have hardly known of your being in the house."

"Yet I felt most uncomfortably awkward that night," I said. "Every thing here was so new to me."

"Yes, I saw you did; but it was the awkwardness of one who is ignorant of the mere forms of society, not the vulgarity of

one who had never been taught good manners. Your mother must have been a lady some time in her life."

"She *is* a lady now," I said, proudly. "I am sure you would think so if you could see her. I know you would like my mother, Mrs. Mather."

"I am sure I should," she replied. "And, if I live till next summer, I think I will go to Hillbury and see her and those beautiful green hills."

My wise, my beloved mother! How often in my life have I felt most grateful to her for not neglecting the *little* things which her good neighbours thought of no consequence, but which everywhere helped me to make friends!

Mrs. Mather went very little into society. Her delicate health and a want of taste for gayety prevented it; and, when her husband (excessively fond of show in every thing) insisted upon her giving parties, she had a quiet, graceful manner of receiving her guests, very unlike his boisterous and vulgar one. In time I came to be of my mother's opinion, that pretension was by no means elegance; and my natural sense

of propriety was often shocked by his boastful, overbearing conversation and that rudeness of demeanour which is selfishly forgetful of the feelings and convenience of others,—a rudeness of which no true gentleman or lady is ever guilty.

What was the effect of such a life upon me, mentally and morally? I thought little about that at the time; but nevertheless I was under powerful influences. I received little direct counsel from any one. "Learn to look out for yourselves, boys: that's the main chance;" "Take care of number one, and all will be well enough;" "'Go ahead:' that's my motto," were the occasional precepts imparted by Mr. Mather, who was always himself buried in cares and bustling about in the most unquiet manner. But the life of all around me taught more effectually than words that wealth was the god they worshipped, and that they considered no sacrifices too costly to lay upon his shrine. I never saw a man who had less time for the real enjoyment of life than Mr. Mather: he had no leisure for reading, for social intercourse, nor for the enjoyment of his beautiful home and affectionate wife.

Time, strength, talents, were all given to the service of Mammon, who returned as a recompense for such devotion — what? I did not then stop to inquire. I had caught something of the spirit of the place, and never doubted we were all working for the most desirable and laudable end. I was insensibly losing the tenderness of conscience which the constant reference to right and duty in my old home had fostered. "Is it right?" "Is it my duty?" were words never heard here. "Will it be a good bargain?" "Will it pay?" "Is it a profitable investment?" These were the points to be decided. They are suitable questions, too, for the business-man to ask; but not the *only* questions. Expediency, (in its limited sense,) self-interest, gain, are not to be made the final end and aim of existence, and they never had been in my father's home; but here the whole atmosphere was different, and I could not inhale it without receiving a new and unhealthful moral influence,—though I never thought and reasoned on the matter at the time.

I went with Harry Dawson and his set of friends—who had become intimate ac-

quaintances of mine — to many places I should once have shrunk from, — places where moderate drinking (almost universally prevalent then) and card-playing were allowed. At first I was only a spectator; but at length I became interested, and sat down to a game of cards with a quiet conscience, — not playing for money, and therefore persuading myself there was no danger in it. Thanks to my mother's training, my soul turned with loathing from the lower haunts of vice, and I could never be persuaded to enter them a second time.

My Sundays were spent very differently from those at home. Mr. Mather seldom attended church; but I went with Mrs. Mather in the morning. My afternoons were spent in light reading of a most frivolous and often injurious character; and I began to go for recreation to the Battery and other fashionable promenades, — never, though, without a remonstrance from conscience and the whispered question, "What would your mother say?"

I received letters from home, always affectionate and containing good advice from that dear mother whose heart was evidently

full of anxiety on my account; but it was not so customary to write then as now, and we never exchanged letters more than once a month at the oftenest. I told her and Susan of all that I thought would interest them, carefully concealing whatever would give them pain.

Was I happy in this new life,—happier than in the old country-home? I scarcely dared ask myself that question; but I was at times conscious of an irrepressible longing for the freedom and affection of former days. I could not at once forget the dear old cottage and the beautiful scenery which had all my life surrounded me; and, as I walked through the crowded streets, visions of green hills and sunny valleys, with the old church-spire glittering above them, rose before me, instead of brick stores and show-windows and human faces. When the novelty of the city was gone, its sights palled on my eye. The excitement they produced at first had to a great extent subsided, and I often longed for a breath of the mountain-air on my cheek and the freedom and buoyancy of the mountain-boy in my heart. But I never thought of going back. Separation

from what I most loved was the penalty to be paid for success in life; and when my heart cried out most loudly and pitifully for some sweet word or look of love, for some good, old-fashioned, pure enjoyment, I silenced its cravings by thinking of the day when I should gratify my friends by a recital of my achievements and successes.

So passed away three months. The soft airs of spring were awakening new longings for the country; and to forget them I accepted more frequently than before proposals to go with Harry and his set of friends. I had no great sympathy with them; yet it gratified me to see that, instead of laughing at my country ignorance, they now rather courted my society; for I had the miserable ambition of being taken for a city-youth. There was to be a celebration of some sort,—a gathering of "good fellows,"—at which I had promised to be present, one mild April evening. I remember well how sweetly and purely the moon looked down upon us as we went noisily down a narrow street to the saloon where our supper was to be eaten.

There were some young men present of

a higher order of intellect than I had often met, and their off-hand witticisms and sprightly repartees quite captivated me. I talked a good deal and well, (for me,) because thoroughly excited. Speeches were made, toasts drunk; and when at length "Our country-friends" was given I rose with flushed cheek and a frame trembling with boyish eagerness to reply to it. I know not what I said; but I remember the cheers with which it was received; for the music of their applause was as sweet to me as that of the most brilliant crowd to the experienced orator. I was half delirious with delight, and drank wine, and ate oysters, and talked, and drank again, half unconscious of what I was about, till a dizziness came over me, and the table, the lights and the faces of my companions all whirled around me. I recollect thinking the open air would restore me, and that I rose to reach the door, but could not walk. A shout of laughter fell on my ears. I remember it sounded to me like the shrieking of a thousand fiends; and I believe I cursed them all, or tried to, as I fell back senseless.

I knew nothing more till I awoke next morning in my own bed, with a terrible pain shooting through my temples. (I heard afterwards I had been brought home by my companions, who saw no one but John at the door and with his help carried me up-stairs.) I tried to rise; but a miserable giddiness forced me to lie down again by the time I was half dressed. By degrees a distinct idea of what had occurred came to me. Oh, what a horrible one it was! Mountains of shame and misery lay on my breast,—a load I could not endure. I thought of my mother, and with a groan of anguish buried my face in the bedclothes. I had been *drunk!* Yes; I, who knew I should never yield to temptation,—I, who was anxious to court danger that I might conquer it,—I was a disgraced outcast, vile in my own eyes and (as I supposed) in the eyes of all who knew me! I would never consent to see my father's or mother's face again. I would never disgrace them or Susan by the presence of a drunken son and brother. I would fly to some distant corner of the world, where they would never see

me more,—where I would hide myself from all eyes forever!

A gentle rap at the door interrupted my dismal meditations. It was Mrs. Mather. I felt my face flush crimson as she looked at me.

"Poor boy!" she said, very gently. "I am sorry you are sick."

"Oh, don't pity me!" I broke out, wildly. "Despise me!—hate me! I deserve it! I don't deserve sympathy or kindness! You don't know," I exclaimed, springing up,—"you don't know I have been *drunk!*" I emphasized the word with a sort of frantic energy.

"Yes; I know you have been led astray, Allen; but I trust it will never happen again,—that this will be a lesson you will never forget. You had better have some breakfast. It is Sunday, you know; and you can remain in your room as long as you choose. Mr. Mather knows you are not well; but he does not suspect the cause and need not be told. After eating something you will feel better."

So saying, she left the room. How her kindness fell like coals of fire on my head!

Yet I felt grateful for it; and my heart was more softened by it than if she had preached a thousand lectures.

John brought up my breakfast. I could only take some coffee, but it refreshed me; and, while trying to think, I fell asleep. It was afternoon when I was awaked by Mrs. Mather's asking, gently, "May I come in?" Mrs. Mather was not a woman of superior mind; but a warmer heart never dwelt in a human breast, and the unkindness and worldliness of those around her had not spoiled it. She was not at that time a member of any church; but I am sure she showed the charity and tenderness of a Christian in her treatment of me that morning. With a woman's tact, she sought to divert my thoughts from my miserable self.

"I had once a beautiful boy," she said, seating herself on my bed, "who if he had lived would have been just your age, Allen. He was the only child I ever had, and he was the delight of my eyes, the pride of my heart; but when he was four years old—the brightest, loveliest little fellow you ever saw—he sickened of scarlet fever and died. I have never ceased to mourn for him,"

she said, wiping the tears from her eyes; "for life has been very lonely without him, —very lonely!"

I felt a deep and respectful sympathy with her grief; but, as the thought of what I had become flashed across me, I exclaimed, "You should be glad he was taken away before he grew up. What if he had lived to become what I am,—a vile outcast, a—a——" Sobs prevented my speech, and the bed fairly shook with my agony.

"If he had, I should have loved and hoped for him still, Allen,—as I do for you. The first night I saw you I fancied you looked a little like my Edward, and my heart warmed to you; and you have since almost taken the place in my heart which would have been his. Allen, you must not ruin yourself; for it would break your mother's heart, and it would sadden mine more than I can tell."

How blessed and healing seemed to me the tears which fell from her eyes! During all the years that have come to me since, amid all the changes they have wrought, I have never been able to think of her kindness that Sunday morning without moist eyes

and a grateful heart. I believe, under God, it was the means of saving me from some desperate deed.

"You must not allow yourself to be ruined," she continued, "or to lose your self-respect because you have once fallen. You have been very much to blame; but this experience may be made a blessing to you. It may lead you to see your own weakness and seek for higher strength."

When she left me it was to fall back into thoughts sad enough, but not so utterly despairing as those of the early morning. Turn which way I would,—to the old home, to my parents' counsels, my sister's tenderness, my obstinacy in leaving them, my future prospects,—all was painful, all forced me to condemn myself. I was humbled. For the first time in my life, I felt I could not trust my own strength to save me from utter degradation and ruin. No one had urged me to drink. I had been led away by my own heedless impulses; and how could I know but I should be again, and that when temptation in any form assailed me I should not become a speedy prey?

Oh, how humiliating it was to remember

my boasting spirit,—the lofty ideas of my own manliness and heroism which I had revelled in! *I* a hero? *I*, who could not resist the first assault of temptation? *I*, who had made myself a brute and worse than a brute? I writhed in torture as such reflections seized me. I dared not look into the future. It seemed an abyss of misery into which I must inevitably plunge and sink lower and lower.

Two resolutions grew up in the midst of these abasing thoughts. One was to tell Mr. Mather what had happened. I would not try to conceal it. I would be known for what I was and bear the consequences. If he dismissed me (and with the thought my heart leaped up at the idea of home,—but to go there in disgrace, to be *sent* home! I could not bear that!) I would find some employment in the city, if I could with the blasted reputation I must now carry with me.

The second resolution—one made most solemnly—was never to taste another drop of intoxicating liquor. I made it with a full conviction that it was for me the only safe course, the only security I could have

that I should not become a miserable drunkard. My mother had wished me to make this promise before leaving home; but I laughed at the idea of any such restraint being necessary. Now I felt deeply that it was necessary; and I asked God to help me to keep that vow. Thanks to his great name, he has enabled me to keep it fully. for I have never since that hour lifted the wine-cup to my lips.

I went down-stairs before tea; and, finding Mr. Mather lounging on the sofa, I summoned all my courage to tell him the story of my shame. To my astonishment, he made very light of it, laughed immoderately at my account of the whirling tables and faces, and, when I had done, said,—

"Well, Allen, it's a bad thing to do,—very bad; but I reckon most youngsters have some experience of that kind. Why, I myself once got so tipsy I was brought home on a board; and I don't think there's a more temperate man than I am anywhere. Don't look so down-hearted, boy. You must be careful not to spree it quite so hard next time: that's all."

"Glad it happened Sunday," I heard him

mutter to himself. "Couldn't have lost a day very well."

I had right feeling enough—thanks to my thoroughly sound home-training—to be disgusted with this mode of treating my conduct; and it gave me the first hearty desire I had felt to be free from Mr. Mather's influence. I had nothing to complain of in his usual treatment of me. Indeed, he seldom troubled himself about me in any way. But he was morally unsound, and I knew it; and I still retained sufficient respect for honour and integrity to be pained by this knowledge and to feel that he was not a suitable person to give me a desirable business education.

The next morning I met the significant glances and gestures of Harry Lawson as I best could. At night I told him of my resolution never to taste of ardent spirits or of any thing which could intoxicate. He ridiculed it most unmercifully; said he had known such resolutions made by *greenies* before, but never knew one to keep them; that I never should; that I had too much spirit to be fettered in that way, and the like. Poor Harry! Well would it have

been for him had he made a similar resolution! It would have saved him from early filling a drunkard's grave; for into such a one he went down long before he had reached middle age. *Poor* Harry! I say again; for there was much that was praiseworthy and winning in his character; but he had all his life been surrounded by circumstances and examples the most unfitted to give him strength of principle. How can we wonder at his end?

## CHAPTER XI.

### REVIEW OF THE PAST.

The succeeding week was a very depressing, painful one. I spent my evenings at home, sometimes in reading to Mrs. Mather, between whom and myself a new bond of union had sprung up, but oftener in my own room, taking very dark views of myself and of the future. I felt more and more that I had not sufficient strength of purpose to preserve myself from ruin. A shuddering presentiment came over me that I should fall; that I should break my resolutions, as so many others had, and become as degraded as they,—perhaps like the most loathsome objects I had seen reeling through the vilest streets of the city!

Amid such gloomy forebodings came likewise a remembrance of the past from which I shrunk almost as painfully. My

sins were "set in order before me." I saw that I had all my life long been living without God in the world. Though I had been more correct in outward deportment than some, and had never committed such gross sins, I saw it was because I had been restrained by circumstances, not that the fear or love of God had been in my heart. I had never sought to win his approbation. I had been filled inwardly with pride and self-conceit,—had been selfish, headstrong, obstinate, bent on self-gratification without reference to the happiness of others or my duties to them. I saw clearly how this selfishness of my heart, this want of love to God, lay at the foundation of all that was wrong in me. I read a great deal in my Bible, trying to get a true idea of its meaning; and when I saw how high and holy its standard was, how it required me to love God with all my heart and soul and strength, I felt how infinitely I had come short of it. I had never loved God at all or tried to please him,—had never sought his presence as I would that of a friend, never rejoiced at feeling he was near me. I had lived almost entirely for-

getful of him; and when thoughts of him and of my obligations to him had come to my mind, I had tried to banish them as soon as possible. They were not welcome, pleasant thoughts. Surely this could not be love. I knew what it was to love a friend,—my mother, for example; to have my heart go out to her in gushing tenderness, to feel a longing for her presence, a strong desire to tell her all I felt, to hear her voice, to receive her approbation and see her bright, loving smile. Could I have such feelings towards God? I never had felt thus; and yet, if I loved him, should I not?

Such thoughts and feelings dwelt with me day after day and night after night, in the house, by the wayside, in the counting-room and in the stillness of my own room. I cannot doubt I was influenced by the Holy Spirit,—that he was seeking to win me away from my guilt and misery. I love to think he might have come to me in answer to the prayers which, I doubt not, went up perpetually from my mother's heart for the child she knew to be in peril. I was very miserable; for I more and more

felt that I was alienated from God and goodness. More and more was I convinced that I had no power in myself to become a loving child of God. As I before said, I knew nothing of metaphysics or theological distinctions; but this I knew and felt, that in *my* heart there was no true holiness, —in other words, no love to God; that, when I tried to become his loving child and to do his will, some obstacle seemed to stand between me and him. This was the unwillingness of my own heart, and I knew it; but there it was,—my rebellious, obstinate heart! It would not yield; and what could I do? I remember throwing myself on the floor in an agony of grief,—almost despair,—and saying, "Oh, if I *could* love God! If I *could* love God!" I knew that he was good and kind and holy,—that I *ought* to love him; but that did not produce love. I could pray and read my Bible and refrain from outward sins; but this was not loving God. In the midst of the most serious act of devotion there would sometimes rise up strong within me the wish to be free from all such restraint, to throw off all thoughts of God and of my obligations

to him, and I would pause in horror at the mockery I had been guilty of. I did not wish to be holy. I really in the depth of my heart wished only for freedom to do just what I pleased; and could I deceive myself with the idea that I was loving God while I felt thus?

I do not remember feeling at this time any very definite dread of future punishment. My great fear was of my own weakness and guilty propensities. But the conviction that I should go on from one stage of folly and guilt to another, in a rapidly-descending path, was what distressed me. I saw a life of holiness,—a bright, pure, celestial path, which led up to God and heaven; but I saw also that, instead of walking in it, I should go farther and farther away into realms of darkness and degradation. I felt convinced that I needed a radical change in all my motives and desires before I could travel heavenward, and that I could not effect this change. Therefore I was miserable,—more miserable than words can express.

As I look back upon my feelings at that period, (and they are too deeply engraved

upon my mind ever to be forgotten,) I do not think I was unduly excited. It seems to me reasonable that an immortal being who sees before him two distinct destinies, one a life of love and joy, of purity and glory, which shall increase forever, the other a life of sin and darkness and ever-increasing vileness and pollution, and knows that he cannot avoid living in one of them through a whole eternity,—it seems to me, I say, reasonable that he should be excited in view of it to deeper emotions than have ever agitated him before. It would be irrational not to be so excited. And if he feels that he is so fully under the control of evil habits and desires that he cannot free himself from their dominion, but is lying a fettered bond-slave, too weak to break the chains that bind him, why should he not send forth from his inmost soul an agonized cry for help? If there be any help in the wide universe of God, should he not seek it with more terrible earnestness than he ever sought any other good? It is only those who have never felt the full value of a human soul, and its actual peril, who are surprised to

see anxiety, and even agony, on the face of a fellow-being who understands his true condition. To lose an eternity of such glory as the redeemed shall know! Can the possibility of such a loss be thought of quietly and without emotion? To suffer such shame and woe as the unredeemed shall experience in that world which the truthful Saviour called one of everlasting punishment! Shall the bare thought of it enter the soul without rousing it to keen anxiety and dread?

I had no human counsellor to consult, no human soul into which I could pour out my sorrows; and perhaps it was as well for me. I needed a new nature; and could any earthly friend have given me one? After this internal conflict had been endured several days, I went on Sunday to church. There was nothing particularly adapted to my state of mind in the service; and I remember wondering why the preacher did not tell how a soul could be saved if there was any possible way in which it could be done,—as if I had not been told it a thousand times already!

I had heard of persons getting relief from

the clear presentation of truth in the sanctuary, and had expected to hear something adapted to my wants,—something which would be like the voice of God speaking to *my* individual soul. When I came home disappointed in this, it was to throw myself on the bed and think over again how incapable I was of saving myself from sin and misery, to look once more shudderingly into the abyss which seemed inevitably to lie before me. *Was there any way of escape from this doom?* I asked the question calmly, as a reasonable being should. Should I go to Jesus and ask his help? I had prayed to him many times, and he had never seemed to hear me. *Was* there any Jesus,—any God? Did any being listen to my cry when I called out into the infinite space for help? For a moment I felt that there was none,—no God to hear me,—to care for me,—to save me! I was drifting alone on the wild ocean of life,—whither? Terrible loneliness! Unutterable! intolerable! It was but for a moment that my faith in a God wavered and went out; but I would not endure the agony of that moment again for worlds! It passed away; and the blessed

conviction that there is a God came into my soul and filled it, after that anguish of desolation, with a most precious hope. I *felt* there was a God rather than reasoned about it; and, if there was a God who had made me, he could save me. I remembered that Jesus had said, "*I* am the *way*, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." I would go to Jesus. In the whole universe there was no other being to whom I could go,—no other who could save me.

I lay with my face on the pillow and told him all that was in my heart,—just how miserable I was, how unable to do any thing to make myself better. "Thou, Lord, seest it," I said. "Thou knowest it all. Thou knowest I do not love thee nor desire to be holy; that I am very sinful and cannot change my heart. If thou art a compassionate being, if thou dost love the creature thou hast made, have mercy upon me! Oh, save me, if thou canst! I cannot save myself; but wilt thou not save me?"

It was a wailing cry, wrung from a soul full of misery and doubt. Exhausted by emotion, I lay quiet, wondering whether

Jesus would hear and help me; and, as I thus wondered, the story of the leper, which I had learned at my mother's knee, came to my mind; how he went in his vile loathsomeness to Jesus and said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" and how "Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean." I wept to think that the leper was healed; that he could go on his way a cleansed, hopeful, happy man; that Jesus was so good to him; that he had put forth his hand and touched him. I loved Jesus for doing it. And then came the thought,—a blissful, heavenly thought it was!—"He will put forth his hand and touch me also. He will say to *me*, 'I will: be thou clean.'" Again I wept that Jesus was so good, so loving. I rejoiced that my soul was lying before him, so near that he could touch it; that though, like the leper, it was very vile, he could say, "Be thou *clean*." It was a blessed thought that there was a Being in the universe who could make my heart clean,—who could "wash me, and I should be whiter than snow." My spirit lay wrapped in a sweet, heavenly peace,—so sweet, so serene and

satisfying I longed to continue enfolded in it forever. It was, I trust, the peace of the child lying on his father's bosom, returned from all his guilty wanderings, received, pardoned, blest,—the peace "of which the world knoweth not."

As I lay in that sweet calm, many texts of Scripture came to my mind,—texts I had often thought of before, but which now were full of new meaning. Especially did this passage affect me:—"Wilt thou not cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" *Might* I thus speak unto him? Would he be *my* guide? He, the pure and holy One, before whom angels veil their faces? It was a thought too full of bliss to be real. I remembered those passages where Christ is spoken of as the Saviour of sinners. *I* was a sinner. Would he be *my* Saviour? "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." What a full, precious assurance these words contained! I read the parable of the Prodigal Son over and over, and wept as I read: it so exactly described me in my wanderings from God and my father's house. And should *I* not say, "I will arise and go to

my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants."? How my heart swelled as I read how, "when he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him"!

I was lost in these delightful views of Christ's love to sinners, when I was roused by the tea-bell. I would have preferred remaining alone, for I was afraid these delightful feelings might leave me if I went down; but I knew it was wrong to make others trouble; and, bathing my eyes and face, I went below, returning as soon as possible to my own room, — that room whose very walls now seemed pervaded by a spirit of love and peace.

It never occurred to me that I had become a pardoned, renewed being,—that my heart had been changed. I was fully occupied with thinking of the wonderful love and compassion of Jesus and the promises made to sinners in the Bible. It seemed full of just such assurances of forgiveness

as a sinful soul needed. How strange it was I had never felt them before! I remembered the fault-finding spirit I had indulged in, formerly, with shame. I saw that my Creator was also my Redeemer,—that, though I was a sinner, helpless and unable to make myself better, it was to just such sinners Christ had spoken, asking them to come to him and be pardoned. I could not change my heart, but he could; and he had said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Why had I not at once gone to him for pardon and a new heart when I felt that I was a sinner? In staying away from him, in not believing his words, had my greatest guilt consisted. Now I would go to him. I did believe he could save me, and that he would. At all events, I would throw myself at his feet, as did the leper, and say, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

With this feeling of trust, I fell asleep. My last thought was a fear that when I awoke my new feelings would have gone.

But, instead of this, when I first saw the morning light shining into my room, there came the sweet thought, "There is a Saviour who can pardon my sins!" Oh, how full of joy was this belief! How spontaneously my heart went up in a song of praise to Him who had died for sinners! Then came the delightful conviction that this Saviour would be my guide,—that I might ask him to be with me through the day, to keep me from sinning against him. And the thought that he would be with me wherever I went, that I might feel his presence in the crowded streets and in the counting-room,—*everywhere*,—was one of the most delightful I had ever known. To have such a friend always near me,—one who could give me right feelings and lead me along in the path to holiness and to heaven,—one who would never forsake me either in life, or in death, or in eternity,—oh, how full of blessedness the very idea was! And yet was it not a reality? Did not the Bible assure me it was so? I recollect the feeling with which I read a part of the fourteenth chapter of John that morning, and how remarkable these words

seemed to me:—"If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and *we will come unto him and make our abode with him.*" And they seem no less wonderful words to me now, after having meditated upon them, from time to time, for thirty years. Will the Father and the Son indeed come and take up their abode in a poor, sinful human soul,—the God of whom it is said the heaven of heavens cannot contain him? Oh, mysterious, unfathomable truth! who shall fully comprehend it? And yet what soul that loves God knows not something of its glorious significance?

With what a new aspect does a human being, whose will and affections have been brought into harmony with God's will, regard life! What new light and beauty rest upon it! President Dwight has said, "In my impenitent state I could never thank God for my *creation*,—only for *preservation*." And I doubt if a thinking person ever rejoices heartily in the existence conferred upon him till the soul has been brought into sympathy with God; till the barrier which sin raises between it and the Creator has been broken down and it is filled with

a sense of forgiveness and a desire to live for God and immortality. Then the whole future becomes bright with the presence of God, as a Friend and Father, a Redeemer and Sanctifier. Life is to be lived under his eye, to be blessed with his smile, to be filled with joyful service rendered to him,—not only life in this world, but the inconceivable, eternal life which stretches out into the illimitable future.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A NEW DECISION.

At the breakfast-table that morning I wondered Mrs. Mather could look sad, the whole world seemed to me so full of brightness and beauty; for it was a world in which sin could be forgiven. As I went down the street, I rejoiced to find that the same indwelling peace which had filled my soul in the stillness of my own room remained with me in the noisy crowd; and the conviction that I might always carry it with me, and always feel the presence of a dear, invisible friend, again made my heart leap for joy. I remember, too, that as I was about entering upon the duties of the day, that morning, I felt as if every requirement of God was easy and delightful. I was to love him supremely and my fellow-beings as myself. What could be

more pleasant than this? I had always fancied that to be religious was to be sad and sorrowful, to live apart from what was brightest and most interesting in the world around me; but now I saw that it was only to carry into the world a new life within me which should lead me to be more deeply interested in others, more thoughtful of their happiness, more gentle, more patient, more industrious and more honest than ever before; and, while trying thus to do his will, I might always meet the approving smile of my Saviour and my Friend. Even the dingy counting-room and the long, dreary desk wore a cheerful look that day, for here was where I was to work under the eye of this dear Friend.

I spoke to no one of these new feelings. Many, I know, feel impelled to tell to all around them of the Saviour and his loveliness; but my instinct was to remain silent. This deepest feeling of my heart seemed too sacred to be talked about, especially to those who would not sympathize with it. But in the evening I wrote a long letter to my mother. Ever since the night of my miserable intoxication, I had hesitated

whether or not to tell her of it. I knew well how her high standard of morality would lead her to regard it; and it would be giving a death-blow to my pride to confess it, though I felt as if it would be right to do so. But now I hesitated no longer. Painful as the thought of falling in her estimation was, I knew I deserved to; and I would not be so cowardly as to shrink from it longer. I told her just what had taken place, without seeking to justify myself. I told her also how degraded I felt afterwards, and how oppressed I had been with the sense of my own inability to withstand temptation,—how I had seen that she was right when she sought to keep me from it, though at the time I had been wilful and blind. I told her, in conclusion, how I had determined to seek help from Jesus, believing that no other being could save me from utter ruin.

"I feel, my dear mother," I said at the close, "that I am just like the prodigal son who wandered from his father's house, yet he was forgiven. Do you think I shall be? Sometimes I feel as if my heavenly Father had forgiven me; and it fills my heart with

such a sweet joy I cannot express it. It makes me weep; but they are not sad tears. How I wish Jesus would let me always keep very near him, that I might feel how kind and loving he is! This morning I thought I should not forget him for a single moment all day long; but I did, and a great many wicked feelings came into my heart. I hope some time I shall be a Christian and learn to do his will.

"And now, my dear parents, will *you* forgive me? I have wandered away from your love and care, like the foolish prodigal. You know how wilful and disobedient I have been,—how ignorant and self-conceited. I am truly sorry for having disobeyed you so many times and for having given you so much trouble, especially at the time I came away from you. Will you forgive me for all I have ever done to trouble and grieve you and pray to God to forgive me also? I wish now to be obedient and to do just what you think is best. I will try to 'honour my father and mother' in future, though I have not in time past.

"Please write me very soon, and tell me what you think about my staying in

New York. It is a very wicked place, and I know you did not want me to come, only I was so determined that you consented. Now, I do not wish you to be influenced by my feelings, but use your own judgment. I will go back and work on the farm if you think I ought to, and try to make my dear father and mother comfortable, and will never complain of my lot again. I feel as if it was easier to be good in the country than here. But God can help people to be good everywhere.

"I want to see you both, and my dear little Susan, more than I can possibly tell, —more than I ever did in my life before. My best love to all; and, hoping you will forgive all I have done that was wrong,

"I remain your dutiful son,

"ALLEN RICHMOND."

That letter lies before me now. The paper is yellow and spotted, and the hand is the straight and rather cramped one of my boyhood. How it carries me back to the evening I wrote it and the little chamber in —— Street! The eighteen-and-three-quarter-cents postage-stamp shows that let-

ters were then a more costly luxury than now; and a tear-stain on its pages tells of the mother's tenderness,—that dear mother who so loved her truant boy, unworthy as he was!

Singularly enough, it happened that the very evening I wrote this my mother was writing me a letter which I received three days afterwards. It was as follows:—

"My dear son Allen:—

"You have not answered our last letter; but I have something to write you of such immediate importance that I will not wait.

"Mr. Sherman, of W——, called to see us yesterday. He is, as you know, an old friend of mine, though I have seen little of him of late years. Some business brought him to Hillbury, and, as it was very stormy, he spent the night with us, after much persuasion. We had pleasant conversation about past times and the companions of our youth, (many of whom, alas! have now departed this life,) and then we turned to the present. While thus conversing, your name was mentioned and your present place of abode. I told him I had many fears for

you,—the more because you seemed to have few for yourself; that I had always secretly hoped you would have chosen to be a mechanic, as I thought your natural capacities lay in that direction, from your having always shown great skill and quickness in the use of tools and great ingenuity in contriving and fitting together articles of use and ornament. I told him, further, that I had wished this also because an enterprising, intelligent and upright mechanic belongs to that middle rank of life which has fewest temptations to evil and the greatest opportunity for being respectable and happy in this life and for preparing for the life to come.

"'Would you not rather he would be a successful merchant than a mechanic?' Mr. Sherman asked, when I had said this.

"On which I told him that the chances for success were few compared to those of failure, and that there was, it seemed to me, more in mercantile pursuits calculated to foster the desire for speedy and unlawful gain and the accumulation of wealth at the sacrifice of better and higher things than in most other occupations; and that I feared

the spirit of speculation and hazardous adventure, common at this day, and so much like gambling in its effect upon the mind and heart, might seize upon you, destroying your true peace of mind and stability of purpose; and that I had rather see you possessing a competence of worldly goods, with a well-ordered mind and a heart in love with nobler things, than the possessor of thousands, or even millions, with a soul full of worldliness and borne down with a load of business cares and perplexities, as is generally the case with those we call successful merchants. And I went on still further to say (for my heart was in the subject) that I thought success in life really meant the attainment of a pure and rational enjoyment, and not merely the adding together of dollars and cents, with wearing labours and perplexities such as made life a burden heavy to be borne; and that I had seen very rich men who were more to be pitied than the poorest I had ever known.

"After I had so fully spoken my mind, Mr. Sherman said he thought I was correct, but that very few were of this opinion. After a little thought, he said, 'If you

would like your son to learn my business, I should be glad to take him,—that is, if he is a young man to be trusted, as I doubt not he is. My business in Hillbury to-day was to get an apprentice of whom I had heard; but I have not succeeded. I would give your son a good chance, bringing him up to do plenty of hard work, to-be-sure, but, at the same time, to be honest and industrious; and when he left me it would be his own fault if he did not earn a good living and make a respectable and useful citizen. But,' he added, with a smile, 'I think no lad who has been a clerk in New York will much relish the idea of coming back to be a country mechanic.' And I was obliged to own I feared so too. Still, he said, I might make you the offer, and he would keep the place open till you decided. 'But remember, Mrs. Richmond,' he said, 'I can't have anybody who isn't willing to work in right good earnest. My shop is no place for a lad with white hands and a head full of foolish notions.'

"So we parted, with the understanding I should write you about his proposal. It has seemed in some way impressed upon

me that I should recommend this plan to you; and I pray God, who knoweth all things, that he will direct you to the right decision. Mr. Sherman is a house-carpenter and joiner, doing a large and prosperous business, having about twelve men in his employ. He is a man of sound principles in every respect, of much good sense and uncommon intelligence. I think no man in the county is more respected than he. He has been repeatedly sent to the Legislature and filled other offices of trust in his native town. I certainly should feel more at ease if you were under his influence; and I could wish nothing better for you than to become as upright, intelligent and religious as he is. I suppose my ideas of things are old-fashioned and will sound strange to you; but I cannot help reminding you that the pleasures and riches of this world are perishing, and that he is poor indeed who has not the blessing of God resting upon him. If I could see you, my dear child, walking in the way of holiness, seeking to do God's will and loving him with all your heart, I could cheerfully lie down in the silent grave, knowing that we should soon meet

again, to be no more parted. Will you not, before deciding this question, reflect seriously upon your duty, consider what you were made for and what a long immortality lies before you, and then pray God to enlighten your mind and incline your heart to do what is right in his sight? Your mother asks this of you, believing you will do it.

"Mr. Sherman would want you to come to him early in May. He will give you your board, forty dollars the first year, sixty the second and one hundred the last. You would be just twenty-one when your term of service was completed.

"All join in earnest love to you. Susan is almost wild at the thought that you may possibly be near us once more.

"From your loving and anxious mother,

"Mary Richmond.

"P.S.—I must add one word to this long letter. I fear I have written as if I thought it were not possible for a merchant to be an upright and godly man. I do not feel so. I know there are many such, the ornament and pride of our country, her boast and her

glory. I only feel, in the anxiety of my heart, that the temptations to be otherwise are very great,—especially as you are situated and with your ignorance of your own heart and the world. I tremble to think of you thus exposed, and long (perhaps it is with a woman's weakness) to see you in a safer shelter. Oh, my dear child, the beloved son of my heart, if I were never to speak to you again, I would charge you to remember that character is of more consequence than possessions; that the soul is of more value than the body; that eternity is longer than time. Think of these things. When you have decided, write

"Your affectionate mother,

"M. R."

The perusal of this letter produced a conflict in my mind. I wished to gratify my mother by a compliance with her wishes; but I did not feel inclined to become a mechanic. There was something rather pleasant in the idea of going back to the old homestead and working as a farmer; but to go to W——, among strangers; to be an apprentice, doing all kinds of low, vulgar

work; to be all my life a hard-working, rough-looking mechanic, who could never hope to rise to an equality with men of the first class in society,—this was far from an agreeable idea. There seemed to me something demeaning in it. I had been so far affected by the state of feeling around me that I looked down upon those who toiled from day to day to earn their bread, and felt great self-complacency in my position as a merchant's clerk in a wholesale store, fancying I was quite elevated in the scale of being above what I called working-men. It was an absurd fancy; for, of all drudgery, that which confined me nine or ten hours to the desk was the most severe; and I could not but confess it. But I had the feeling; and, when I came to think seriously of leaving New York, I found, much as I had on many accounts disliked living there, the thought of leaving was painful.

But the question arose, "Am I willing to do what is *right?* Am I willing to obey God, if it does cost a sacrifice of my dearest hopes? If it is his will that I should be poor and looked down upon by the world, can I submit to it? Am I to

live for God or for myself?" I could not answer such questions without a struggle; but I was at length enabled to say, sincerely, "Lord, if thou wilt show me the path of duty, I will walk in it, even if it be a painful one, relying upon thine arm to sustain me."

I look upon this decision as the turning-point in my moral history. It was in this form the question came to me:—"Will you have God to reign over you?" I did not decide what business I should follow, but I did decide by what principle I would in future be governed. I settled this point clearly in my mind,—that I would do what I believed to be my duty, let it cost what it might. I came to this conclusion soberly, after mature deliberation. God had created me; he had a right to control my actions; his requirements were all just and kind, and obedience to them was the duty of a reasonable, accountable being. I therefore gave myself to him, to be guided henceforth by him in all things for evermore. This consecration was, I believe, as entire as if I had decided to go on a foreign mission or to prison for his sake; and I cannot

but remark, in passing, that I believe this self-denial is the only source of true Christian joy. There may be ardent, delightful feeling which seems like Christian love and gratitude; but, if it is not accompanied by a thorough self-consecration,—a thorough abjuring of self as the principle of action,—it will pass away like the morning cloud. "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it," said Jesus. But he that clingeth to life—the old, selfish, godless life—shall lose that life of God in the soul which Christ gives to his disciples.

I have said this decision was not easily made. It cost me hours of severe mental conflict,—hours of earnest prayer for grace to strengthen me. It was like cutting off the right hand or plucking out the right eye; for I laid on the altar every ambitious hope and every plan for self-aggrandizement, praying only that I might be a child of God, meekly receiving from him whatever earthly good he saw fit to bestow, and that, when life on earth was over, I might go to dwell with him forever. It was a blessed decision. It brought me into harmony with angel and archangel, cherubim

and seraphim, who all serve God day and night. It gave me an object to live for, a work to do; and the object was an elevated one and the work such as an immortal being could feel was worth accomplishing. With this purpose to serve God in my soul, I could go forth into life free from all the trammels which sin imposes upon her votaries,—a truly free man, with nothing to fear, for God was my chosen master and his service was perfect liberty. Oh, how often since, when I have seen political parties contending fiercely for victory, each with the sacred name of Freedom stamped upon its banner, have I longed to have this great truth enter into their souls, that only in serving God was ever true freedom found by a human being, and that while they were slaves to their own vile passions they would be unable to conceive even of the true joy and glory of actual freedom!

> "He is a freeman whom the truth makes free,
> And all are slaves beside,"

is an axiom few seem willing to acknowledge in the heat of controversy; yet every Christian must have felt in his heart that it

was a truth of deep and broad significance.

But I am wandering.

When this great principle of future action was settled, there came the minor one, "Shall I accept or reject Mr. Sherman's proposal?" I looked up to God for guidance, and felt an unspeakably-sweet satisfaction in yielding my will to his. Of one thing I felt sure,—that it was not my duty to remain with Mr. Mather. Facts which had recently come to my knowledge had convinced me that he was doing business as no truly upright man would, and I might be required at any time to aid in a system of fraudulent dealing,—nay, perhaps was doing it daily. Should I become a mechanic, or try to secure a situation as clerk in some other establishment in the city? My selfish wishes were in favour of the latter; yet, when I looked at the young men I knew, who were filling the places of clerks, either as book-keepers or salesmen, I was constrained to confess that they were surrounded by influences unfavourable to the development of Christian character. I was not aware that I had any peculiar adaptedness to mercan-

tile life; and yet I might succeed and rise if I continued in it. If faithful and enterprising, I might gain the confidence of my employers, perhaps secure a good partnership, and become an honourable, wealthy Christian merchant, using all my extended influence for doing good. Such an end seemed most desirable as I looked forward to it.

If I went to W——, I should be almost sure of becoming a good mechanic; for I felt that my mother was right in thinking I had a natural tact in the use of tools. I should be exposed to fewer temptations, be less swallowed up by the hurry of business, and probably live a quiet, honest, humble life, but not one of very enlarged means of influence. Looking thus at both sides of the question, I might have been undecided as to what was my duty had not my mother's wishes come in as a weight to turn the scale. It was certainly a duty to honour my parents by a compliance with their desires; and, if it required a sacrifice of my personal preferences, it was no less a duty. The still, small voice within spoke distinctly on this point; and it showed me,

also, that I was only giving up selfish desires for worldly position in yielding my preferences,—not any thing of a higher nature. It was my darling sin,—this pride, this desire to be admired and distinguished by my fellow-men; but it should be given up. "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate;" "Seek not honour from men, but that which cometh from God only," were texts which occurred to me; and I received them as the voice of God to my soul. I could not be wrong in yielding obedience to my parents and to the voice which spoke from God's holy word so plainly to my conscience.

So I decided to leave New York, with all the brilliant hopes I had cherished of attaining wealth and position there, and return to the country, to become (if my life should be spared) a hard-working, humble mechanic. God saw this decision was made conscientiously, and his blessing rested upon it. I have never regretted it. I might have succeeded if I had stayed in New York, or I might have been unfortunate, living from hand to mouth on a clerk's salary all my days, confined to the wretched atmosphere

of some narrow street and worn out prematurely with care and anxiety. I cannot tell. I only know I did what then seemed to me right, and have lived a quiet and, I trust, useful life among the fresh, healthful influences of the country. I have been blessed in my labours, have attained to a competency of worldly treasure, and have now a heart running over with gratitude for the unbounded goodness which has always protected and guided me.

I informed Mr. Mather of my decision immediately; and, though I felt under no obligation to stay, (as it had been understood I was to leave if I wished, being there only on trial,) I offered to remain till he found some one to take my place, as I wished to be honourable in the matter. To my surprise, Mr. Mather appeared much offended. He called both me and my parents very uncivil names, and used a good deal of profane language, concluding by saying, "The sooner I get rid of such a fool the better. I don't want you to write another line in my office. I won't let you write one. No, not a single word more!" And, muttering something about never

having any thing to do with a relation again as long as he lived, he left the room.

I was truly grieved by his regarding it in this light, for I thought he had meant to treat me kindly, and had desired my success, according to his idea of the word. But it could not be helped; and, painful as this interview was, it was our last, for we never met again.

It was with very different emotions I communicated my plans to Mrs. Mather, for I felt sad to part from her and fancied she would regret my departure; but she expressed only satisfaction.

"I am really glad, Allen," she said, "that you are going. I shall miss you sadly; but, dearly as I love you, or rather because I love you, I do not wish you to stay here. I have been so afraid you would fall a prey to the temptations around you; for they are greater than you dream of. It seems almost impossible to avoid becoming, in some form or other, dishonest and corrupt in this great city. Sometimes," she added, sadly, "I fear that things are not going on as they should, and that trouble is coming upon us; but perhaps it is only because I am weak and

nervous. I shall rejoice to feel that you are safe. I shall always love you as if you were my own son, and I hope you will sometimes think of me, for I am often very unhappy in the midst of all our seeming prosperity."

We both wept; and I felt then, as I had often and often felt before, often and often since, that external means of enjoyment, so much coveted by the beholders, may cover a most sad, miserable heart.

I may as well say here that, in less than a year from this time, the firm of Ostrander, Mather & Co. were suspected of making fraudulent returns by a company who had employed them to effect their sales, and, on an investigation, Mr. Mather fled from the city to elude his pursuers, who were determined to bring him to justice. Mr. Ostrander the elder was in Europe at the time, and the younger brother, who was indicted for swindling, was at length discharged, he having been only a tool in the hands of others. Mr. Mather lived about two years in one of our Southern cities, where he died suddenly of brain-fever.

I can conceive of no sadder life than his,

a life destitute of all right principle and all true enjoyment; a life full of uneasiness, even when it was most successful, and which crushed all nobleness out of his nature, leaving only a shattered wreck of talents wasted or misapplied. Wretched life! and a still more wretched preparation for the endless life hereafter!

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE OLD HOME AND THE NEW.

I LEFT New York the first day of May. I had parted with my acquaintances in a friendly way, and with Mrs. Mather, my one friend, with sincere regret. As I stood on the deck of the steamer when it glided out of the harbour, and looked back on the great city in the clear light of that beautiful spring morning, I felt like one awaking from a feverish dream. The city, with its eager crowds, its perpetual din, its great throbbing life, so splendid and imposing on the surface, so wretchedly revolting and black in the currents which flowed beneath, seemed to me something unreal. It would henceforth be to me only a wild, confused vision,—something in which I had no part or lot. I was willing it should be so,—willing that my lot in life should henceforth be a

quiet and obscure one. Yet never could those three months of my life be forgotten. Amid the distractions of that great chaos, God's voice had reached me and taught me to know myself. I had needed such an experience to humble me, to sober me; and I could not look back upon the way in which God had led me, without an overwhelming emotion of gratitude to Him who had rescued me from the perils into which I had plunged so recklessly. Yes, there was one tie which would forever bind me to New York: it was my spiritual birthplace. I watched it till not a vestige was visible, lifting my heart in prayer for those who were still encompassed by its temptations, imploring that to them God would draw near in power and rescue them, as I hoped he had rescued me.

As we sailed over the clear sparkling water that morning, and I inhaled the fresh breeze that blew across it, a burden rolled off from my heart, and it sprang up, elastic and joyous, to meet the future. I was going forth, under God's eye, to work and suffer, perhaps, but never alone. If I was obscure and unnoticed among men, I might secure

the approbation of God; and, as I leaned against the railing of the promenade deck, a rich current of joy flowed over my soul, and I anew consecrated myself to God's service and breathed a prayer for strength to fulfil the vow.

The sail over the Sound was delightful; and when we entered the river at Saybrook, it was a perpetual feast to gaze upon the hills and meadows on its banks. After my three months' confinement in the city, nature was lovelier than ever. Never before had grass looked so green or trees half so stately or wide-spreading. To just breathe the air wafted from a thousand blossoming trees was luxury enough, and I revelled in a delicious indulgence of every sense. Then came a vision of home, and my heart bounded at the thought of so soon seeing my parents and Susan. There were no railroads then, and it was almost night when we reached Hartford. The next morning was bright as a May morning could be, and the ride in a stage-coach through that beautiful Connecticut valley was very charming; but my heart grew impatient with its home longings, and we

seemed to move very slowly, especially after we entered upon the hilly country back from the river. But the hours passed, and by degrees we neared the beloved spot: things began to wear a familiar aspect, and, slowly as we moved, before sunset we rattled up to the post-office in dear old Hillbury. I could not wait, but, jumping off, I ran up the hill on foot. My heart throbbed painfully as I came in sight of the house. What if something should be wrong there? How still it was about the yard! How familiar the old oak-tree looked, and the lilac and white-rose-bush, and the little chickens peeping in the grass! With a trembling hand I raised the latch: no one was in the kitchen; but the bedroom door opened, and I was in my mother's arms! My dear, dear, mother! how she wept as she pressed me to her heart in that long, blissful embrace! For a time neither of us could speak; but, after becoming a little composed, each of us had much to tell. There was nothing wrong at home: my father had gone for the cows, and Susan was taking tea with a neighbour and would be home before dark. Home,

home, home! how delightful it was to be there! how sweet to look round the room and see just the same articles of furniture, all so plain and old-fashioned, but all so very dear to my heart!

When the excitement of the meeting had passed off a little, I saw my dear mother looked thin and pale. She said a cough had troubled her all winter, but it was better since the warm weather, and seeing me would complete the cure. The meeting with my father was just as joyous; and when, after tea, I went for Susan and met her at the foot of the hill, my rapture was complete. "Little Susan" we all called her, as a term of endearment; but she was fast growing into quite a tall young woman, and I thought that in all New York I had seen nothing lovelier than her rosy face lighted up with joy at seeing me.

I was obliged to confess to myself the house looked smaller than it used to, and the little kitchen lower and darker, especially at evening, when the contrast was very striking between gas-light and one flickering tallow candle; but there was such sweetness in the affection of home, and in

its perfect communion of heart with heart, which I had found nowhere else, that the want of little conveniences was not seriously felt. I had not lived long enough amid the refinements of life to make them necessities; and I easily fell into all my old habits. The only thing that cast a shadow on the joy of my heart was my mother's manifest feebleness. She seemed in no wise anxious about herself, and often said she had never been so happy; but I found Susan shared in my anxieties. The pale, thin features, which every day looked more wan and wasted, the dry, short cough, the occasional bright flush upon the cheek, were all dangerous symptoms, we knew. Yet we were too light-hearted to dwell upon the dark side of the picture: so we hoped —nay, said over and over to each other we were *sure*—she would be quite well again now the cold winds had gone. My homecoming had seemed to give her new life and to fill her heart with joy; and I can never cease to be grateful that I did come, if it were only that it gave this added brightness to her life. My reckless, ungrateful spirit and my leaving home had

been a heavy blow to her; and I shall always feel that it hastened the disease which was now silently exhausting the springs of life.

It was arranged by Mr. Sherman that I should come to him the 1st of June; so that I had four weeks at home. What delightful weeks they were! How I love now to look back upon them! This period was made peculiarly sacred to me by the confidential intercourse I had with my mother. What precious talks we had at night after the rest had left us, when we opened our whole hearts to each other and tasted, to the full, the bliss of communing together! Is there any affection—any *earthly* affection—sweeter than that between a mother and a grown-up son? It seems to me there are peculiar elements in it which make it almost more sacred than any other,—especially when, as in my case, there had been a transient alienation.

Those wise and strengthening words, spoken so tenderly to me then, will always abide with me. They have deterred me often from yielding to evil suggestions, and proved an incentive to high and holy pur-

poses. If I bless God for any earthly possession, it is for the legacy of the pure example and of the wise and quickening words which my mother bequeathed to me. It is an incorruptible, enduring and increasingly-precious inheritance.

The reserve of my mother's nature seemed to have melted away; and she told me of her past struggles and of her present peace with great freedom. Yes, I shall always rejoice that my mother was then at peace. Nothing troubled her. The debt upon the farm was almost cancelled; Susan was grown so strong and so willing that she relieved her of all household cares; I was to be near her; and we often laid plans for the future as gayly as if we were all children. How she was to live with us, and fold her hands in her old age, while we worked for her. How she was to lay aside all care and sit in a great rocking-chair all day long, knitting and reading,—the two great luxuries, as we knew, of her simple life.

Very often she talked, too, of the rest beyond the grave. How sweet it would be to us when the labours of life were all over,

—its duties all done! The thought of entering into that rest was evidently very pleasant to her; but we hoped it would be long before her wings would be grown and plumed for a heavenward flight.

I required a little fitting-out for my new employment. The nice New York suit of clothes would last me a long time for my best; but I had another, made by the Hillbury tailoress, of coarse material suitable for work. I cannot help smiling now when I remember the feelings I had about this suit. I was just at the age when a young man is most sensitive about personal appearance; and, as I had been somewhat flattered about mine, a foolish vanity had crept into my heart, and there was really no trial connected with my change of business so mortifying, so hard to submit to, as the putting on of those ill-made, coarse garments. I should have blushed to own it, even to myself; but it was a fact, and I had to bring all the strength of my principle to bear upon it before I could overcome the repugnance I felt to wearing them. Our crosses often come in a shape others little dream of; and they are none

the less crosses for being trivial in the sight of others.

My vanity had been fostered by the kindness of my old Hillbury neighbours, who, in the simplicity of their hearts, commented on my improved appearance; and (I am ashamed to remember) I was conscious of being the "observed of all observers" as I walked up the aisle in the old church on Sunday morning. Oh, how miserably weak is the human heart, which can carry its poor, paltry distinctions into the temple of the Most High God and pollute its offerings with such mean thoughts of self! But I did struggle to overcome it,—though for years this silly pride was a hydra-headed monster which was springing up into fresh life after every defeat.

Another memorable incident of this visit was my reading the life of Benjamin Franklin, written chiefly by himself. It produced a powerful impression on me, giving me a higher respect for mechanics and rousing my ambition to become something more than merely a good workman. I resolved to imitate him in spending my leisure hours in study and in attempting to acquire a good

style in writing. My mother wished me to keep a little journal for her; and I determined to do so, for my own improvement as well as her pleasure,—a determination I carried out, and to which I attribute whatever freedom of expressing my thoughts in writing I may possess.

The time for leaving home again had come. The pleasant meetings with friends, the rambles about the farm and pasture and the sweet hours of sacred home-enjoyment were all over; and on the first day of June I started for W——. The parting was a very different one from my last. There was as much tenderness, and far more confidence, in my mother's parting embrace; and a bright light beamed in her eye as she whispered, "I am sure you will try to do your duty, Allen, and that God will bless you." And Susan said, "It scarcely seems like losing you now, you will be coming home so soon!"

So all was as cheerful and sunny in our hearts as in the sky above us. My father was to take me over in his wagon, and we rode together in the freshness of that early morning through the pine-woods gemmed

with dew and scattering their delicious fragrance, while far off in the heart of the forest rung out tuneful and clear the note of the wood-robin,—that most spirit-stirring of all wild-wood melodies! My heart was peaceful and joyous; for I could say, as I gazed with delight on every thing around me,—

"*My Father* made them all!"

It was inexpressible joy to know I had such a Father, who would be with me always; and again I renewed my consecration to his blessed service. I was not going into a new place, among new duties, *alone*, but a wise and powerful Friend went with me; and the thought of it was full of sweetness.

It was a charming ride, and we talked of many bright and pleasant things. I had often been in W——, as it was the shire-town of the county and the market for the farmers' produce. It was a large, handsomely-built and wealthy town, having a good many old families, who prided themselves on their birth and intellectual culture. The distinctions and customs of society

there were almost as unlike those of Hillbury as were those of New York itself; and when I was a boy I used to feel an admiring awe as I rode past the beautiful mansions, surrounded by cultivated grounds, and saw gentlemen and ladies walking in them. There were handsome stores and offices in the centre of the town, which we passed to reach Mr. Sherman's house. As we drove by them, I sighed to think I should be looked down upon by the young men in them; but I had determined to rise above all such thoughts, and I succeeded to a certain degree. By this time I had found I should need all my courage and heroism in the conflict with my own evil passions; and, as my mother had so long before wished, I resolved to be a good soldier and carry a brave heart into the warfare. I would respect myself while I conducted well, and try to merit, if I did not receive, the respect of others. But it was not easy for me to be humble; and only as I prayed for strength from on high could I take my true position as an apprentice to a carpenter.

Mr. Sherman gave us a cordial welcome. He was a fine-looking man of about sixty,

with a piercing gray eye and features which indicated both firmness and benevolence. I found I was not to board in his family, but with a widow near by.

After a little conversation, he went over to the shop with my father and me. It was a large building, with every convenience for his business. The working-room was full of men busily employed; and it had a very cheerful look, with all its windows open, letting in the brightness of that summer morning. Long work-benches were arranged around it, and there was a busy sound of planes and chisels, with now and then sharp-ringing blows from hammers wielded by vigorous arms. The odour of the pine-wood on which they were working was very pleasant, and every thing looked clean and orderly.

"Here, my men, is our new apprentice, Allen Richmond," said Mr. Sherman, in his frank, pleasant voice. "I hope he will like us and make as good a workman as the best of you."

The resolution to become such which was swelling in my heart showed itself, I think, in my face; for he added,—

"Yes, I see you mean to be; and that is one great secret of success. He will commence work to-morrow morning. I shall put him under your instruction, Mr. Carr. I know you have patience with beginners."

Mr. Sherman then examined some of the work with his keen, practised eye, sometimes commending it and sometimes suggesting improvements. It was easy to see he had the respect and confidence of his men; and my estimate of a good mechanic again rose as I saw the influence he possessed over them.

"I have only a few rules," he said to me; "but those I expect to be strictly observed. The first is, *perfect obedience* to the orders of your superiors. There must be system in a place like this: some must plan the work, and all must unite in carrying out the plan. If you consider yourself wronged in any way, come to me openly. I want no cabals among my men,—no underhand talking over supposed grievances till they get soured and cross. If there is just cause for complaint, it shall be corrected. Nothing, however, is more unmanly than a

fault-finding spirit. I am glad to say there is little of it among my men.

"My second rule is, *strict punctuality.* When told to do a thing, do it at once. If you dawdle round half an hour, or even ten minutes, before commencing it, others will be delayed by your negligence, and others still by their's, till every thing gets behindhand. I owe my success in business more to this one thing than any other,—punctuality in meeting appointments and in doing what I had promised promptly. A tardy, slack mechanic will be certain to be a poor one.

"My third rule is, *keep every thing in its place.* The apprentice who mislays his tools or his piece of work will annoy others as well as waste his own time. A thing which isn't in its own place is in a place where something else belongs; and confusion begun in one corner of the shop will soon be felt all round it. My men pride themselves on keeping a neat-looking shop; and each must help to keep it tidy. I believe," said he, laughing, "the reason I have such a good-natured set of workmen is, that they are required to be so orderly.

Half the fretting there is in this world grows out of the disorder and confusion we find in our homes and places of business." The bright response on the faces of the men showed they agreed with him. "Here, Richmond, you have my three shop-rules:—Do *what* you are told *when* you are told, and put things in their places. Easy to remember and easy to obey. For the rest, 'Strong arms, bright faces and brave hearts' is our motto."

There was a hearty frankness in his manner which showed he had confidence in his hands and they in him. I felt that first hour in his shop that both mental and moral excellence went to make up an influence like his; and the more I knew of him the more I saw that sound judgment and high principle, as well as mechanical skill, were prominent traits in his character; and a noble character it was,—worthy of all reverence.

"I usually," he said to my father, after we left the shop, "give a beginner a few hints on propriety of manners; but I am sure your wife's son cannot need them. He will not be speaking rudely and boisterously in

the shop, or be guilty of indecorous behaviour anywhere."

My dear, good mother! how her example benefited me everywhere I went!

After dinner, my father bade me farewell. I was once more thrown upon myself,—once more beginning the world; and this time I felt confident I was commencing upon the business of my life.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### MY JOURNAL.

"*June 2d.*—I will begin this journal for you to-night, dear mother, though there is not much to put in it. Father told you about my room. It is not very pleasant, but I shall find it comfortable, I think. The name of my room-mate is Williams. He is three years older than I am, and on his last year as apprentice. He says most of the apprentices become journeymen in the shop after they learn the trade. He is short and thick-set, but has a sensible face. After dear father went away I felt a little blue, and went to my trunk to take out my clothes. How nicely you had packed every thing, dear mother! and in the middle of it I found that beautiful copy of Cowper's poems from you and the pretty handkerchief from Susan. My dear

mother and sister, how kind you were! Seeing them was just like a sunbeam in a dark day; and I felt so glad and grateful! Your little note in the book was precious! Oh, if I am not good, it will be my own fault.

"I went to the shop about four o'clock to see how the work was carried on. Mr. Carr is the head-journeyman, and they say is the best workman in the county; and he is to teach me. I mean to try to please him and learn as fast as I can. I feel already as if I should like working here better than writing in a dark, hot store in New York.

"At tea-time there were eight at the table,—Mrs. Jones, the widow lady with whom I board, her daughter, two nephews of her's, who are clerks in stores, and four from our shop. I spent the evening in my own room, reading Silliman's Travels, (which, you know, Mr. H—— was kind enough to lend me,) stopping pretty often to think of home. When Williams came up, I remembered what you said about prayers. I felt fluttered, and I am sure my face was very red; but I finally found

courage to open my Bible and say to him, 'I always read a chapter before I go to bed.' Oh, mother, you can't think how much it cost me to say this, there was so much false shame in my heart,—as if anybody ought to be ashamed to read a chapter in the Bible or say his prayers! How rejoiced I was when Williams said he always read one too! It did seem so good to have such a room-mate! I think he was glad too; for he said his last one always ridiculed it, and sometimes he omitted it, though he knew it was very wrong. So we sat, side by side, and read, and then he offered a prayer, for he is the oldest, and we have determined to take turns. Then we lay down with such happy hearts! How good God is!

"Williams's mother is a widow and very poor, and he is the oldest of seven children. I guess he is a good young man, for he seems to love his mother dearly. This morning I was up before sunrise. Williams was sound asleep; and so I dressed quietly not to disturb him, softly raising the window to let in the sweet breath of morning when I had finished. Then I sat

down to read my chapter. I prayed for a blessing on myself to-day and through all the time I stay here. I felt very peaceful, and very grateful too, I hope; though I remember you said once to be grateful was different from being merely glad. I think I was both glad and grateful. How I thought of you all at home! I hope you did not cough much last night. I heard the clock strike five just as I took up my book of travels to read, and I did not hurry my Bible-reading and prayers either. Williams did not wake till the bell rung, fifteen minutes before breakfast, which is at six, and he had to dress in a great hurry and did not get down till we were half through breakfast. We went right to the shop, where I worked at planing boards till the town clock struck twelve, when we came home to dinner. We begin work at one and work till half-past five, and have tea at six. My arms and back were pretty tired; but I shall get used to it. I was awkward about my work; and Scott (who is the apprentice next to me) kept laughing at my blunders and jogging the others to look at me. I felt myself getting very angry;

but I shut my lips close together and said over the letters of the alphabet to myself without opening them. You know our minister said that was the way some old Greek philosopher did; and I thought then I would try it every time I felt angry; but I almost forgot it. Then I thought how Jesus Christ was always meek when he was persecuted, and how he was seeing me every moment. I was glad I did not say a word, but Jesus saw what a dreadfully angry feeling there was inside. How shall I get rid of that?

"After tea I came to my room, and have been sitting here alone writing this. The bell is ringing for nine, and I will stop.

"*Sunday evening, June 6th.*—I have been to church all day, and I like Mr. Dean very much. His text was, 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' It was a very solemn sermon, and I was sure no one could hear it without wishing to have something besides this world for his portion. He spoke very earnestly about what a terrible thing it was to lose the soul. I wish I could realize this more and more.

"I found it hard to keep the day as I ought to at home. In the morning, Scott and Palmer kept coming into the room; and when they found us reading good books they ridiculed us,—Scott especially,—saying,—

"'La! how pious we are, sitting up here with our Bibles in our hands! Two such saints won't want to have any thing to do with us sinners!'

"I could scarcely keep from smiling; but, as Williams said nothing, I finally told them, 'Yes; we do want to be quiet Sundays. I wish you would sit down and read, too.'

"'Oh, I guess we will all have a prayer-meeting in here! Brother Palmer, will you take the lead?'

"Palmer seemed less inclined to talk profanely, and said to Scott, 'You are too bad! let's go off.' But Scott would keep running on in this strain, till I grew angry, and said, 'I wished he would leave the room. If he hadn't any religion himself, he need not interfere with those who had.' It was very wrong in me to be angry and boastful; and I felt reproved when Scott said,—

"'Oh, ho! So our saints can get mad even to-day! I wonder if it isn't as wicked to get mad as to talk and laugh a little bit.' And he went off, laughing.

"This disturbed me very much. I was ashamed to be detected in anger,—more ashamed of it, I fear, than of the sin itself; for I was anxious to show them I was better than they. What a Pharisee I was, with that secret feeling of complacency and superiority in my heart! And now even they despised me! It was a just punishment for my self-conceit. I went to church with my spirit ruffled by this little incident, and it was a long time before I could get composed.

"Mr. Sherman provides a good pew for his apprentices in the church at which he attends. I stayed at noon, and Mr. Sherman took me into a Sunday-school class where were several young men of my own age. They are studying the Book of Daniel. I had no lesson; but the teacher was very kind, and explained a good deal of it to me. Mr. Sherman has a class; and Williams, too, has a class of little boys.

"After service in the afternoon, I was alone

in my room; and I felt very sad to think how many wicked feelings I had in the morning. Oh, mother! I don't believe I shall ever be good as others are who love Jesus; and yet it seems to me as if I love him some and wish to please him. I had thought a great deal about Scott and Palmer during the week, and how I would try to do them good,—they are so wild and thoughtless; and by getting so angry this morning I have lost their respect and now can't say a word to them. Then I am always thinking of myself as better than they. I wish such wicked pride wouldn't come creeping into my heart all the time! I could do nothing this afternoon but grieve over my folly and ask God to forgive me and teach me how to do right. Then I felt peaceful and happy. I rejoiced that I could go to Jesus for help, instead of ridiculing prayer. But if I had been left to myself I should have been as trifling and unbelieving as Scott is. I do wish I could influence him to love the Saviour. He is very witty and bright, and not bad-tempered, exactly,—only always teasing some one or making sport. I can do nothing

but pray for him. God's Spirit can make him love holiness.

"Just as I wrote that last line, Scott came in. He seemed less wild than in the morning; and, after chatting a little, I said to him,—

"'Scott, I am very sorry I was angry with you this morning. I wish I could learn to control my temper!' I believe my eyes filled with tears, for I felt very sad. Instead of laughing at me, as I expected, he said,—

"'Why, Richmond, you needn't feel bad about it. I was to blame for teasing you so; but I can't bear hypocrites, and when I see people setting up to be so mighty good it always vexes me. Don't you suppose,' he added, after a little pause, 'that these pious people are pretty much like other folks, only they draw down their faces longer?'

"'Why, didn't you ever see a real good Christian, Scott?' I asked. 'Haven't you got a religious mother?'

"'No, I haven't!' he said, bitterly. 'I haven't got any mother. Mine died when

I was two years old. I have got a step-mother; but I hate her. She sets my father against me and tells him lies about me, and has driven me away from home to make room for her children. And she's one of your pious sort, too, with her face all drawn down, pretending she's dreadful good!'

"'Oh, she can't be a real Christian if she does such things,' I said. 'Christ tells us to be truthful and gentle and to love everybody. If you had such a good Christian for a mother as I have, you wouldn't think they were all hypocrites.'

"'I tell you what 'tis, Richmond, I don't believe in such things, because I never saw anybody much better off for their religion; but if you do, I won't quarrel with you. I look at it as a weakness; and I guess you'll outgrow it one of these days.'

"'Oh, no, I sha'n't!' I said, earnestly. 'I know there's something real in religion, if I haven't got any myself.' And I could not help saying, 'Oh, I wish *you* were a Christian,—a *real* one: you would be so happy!'

"'Don't preach to me!' he said, angrily, knocking away the hand I had placed on

his shoulder: 'if I let you alone, you've got to let me alone too.' And he rushed out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

"I am sorry I made him angry. I did not mean to. I am afraid I never shall do any good. I don't know how to, and always do harm when I try. I wish you would pray for him, dear mother: it seems as if *your* prayers would be heard. He has got no mother to love him: so it isn't strange he is so far from what he should be. What should I have been without a dear, good mother? Every day of my life I am more and more grateful for all your love and care.

"*Saturday night, June 12th.*—The week has come to a close. Not much to tell of has happened; but it has been a very busy one, for all hands have been at work early and late on a house. I helped shingle it, and felt pride in running about on the very top ridge of the roof. When Mr. Sherman saw me there, he called out, sternly, 'Come down, Richmond!' and, when I obeyed, he said, 'Keep your agility till it is needed for

some useful purpose. Courage and recklessness are two things. Be fearless when it is your duty to go to dangerous places; but don't be fool-hardy.'

"I have been too tired every night to write. I hope Susan got the letter I sent Monday. It has been fine weather, and I have enjoyed working out in the open air. There was a beautiful prospect of the river and the meadows from the roof where we worked. I don't think hard work hurts me. I sleep soundly all night, and wake up as bright as a new dollar in the morning, ready for another day's work. I have read an hour before breakfast every morning. Friday evening, Williams and I went to the weekly lecture in the vestry.

"*Sunday evening.*—No one disturbed us this morning, and it has been a sweet Sunday. Williams and I studied our Sunday-school lesson together after breakfast, and I am afraid I felt a little pride in having more knowledge of ancient history than he; and in the class I tried to show off my learning by referring to what Rollin says of Nebuchadnezzar, and felt flattered when the

teacher said 'he wished they all would study the lesson as thoroughly as I did.' I am sure God was displeased at my pride. How shall I get rid of it? It is lurking slyly in every corner.

"*June 25th.*—It is two weeks since I wrote here. I feel quite at home in W—— now, and begin to use different kinds of tools more easily. Mr. Carr says I am very handy with them. I like him very much. He talks very little, but is always pleasant and kind in showing me how to do different pieces of work and telling me why they are done so. He is *very* particular, and makes me do a thing over and over if it isn't exactly right. He has such a nice eye that he sees one hair's breadth of difference at a glance. *Exact* and *thorough* are his great words; and he says no one can make a good workman who is not willing to take time to do every piece of work in the best possible manner; and when I sometimes get a little out of patience in going over my work so many times he laughs, and says he is going to make me the best workman in the State. I mean to be; for I feel

that I have in me the capacity for it. Is it wrong to wish to excel in one's business? 'Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well,' is a precept you taught me years ago, dear mother.

"Mr. Sherman is with his men about three hours every day, and overlooks every thing. He is so cheerful we all feel happier when he is there. 'Heavy hearts and cross looks never yet accomplished any thing in this world,' he sometimes says; and he infuses his own joyous spirit into those around him. He takes an interest in each individual, always commending one who is improving or trying to. Yesterday he took up a door I had fitted together, and said that was quite workmanlike; and when Mr. Carr told him he never had an apprentice who managed tools better,—adding, 'He'll make a good workman,'—he looked as pleased almost as I felt. 'It's worth trying for,' he said, in his cheerful tone. 'There's no man better off than a good, honest, industrious mechanic. By-the-way, I was very glad to see you in the Sunday-school, Richmond, for I want all my young

men to be fitting for another world as well as this. This life is soon over; but the other lasts forever.' When I came home the next day, I found a Commentary on Daniel in my room, and a line from Mr. Sherman, saying he would lend it to Williams and me while we were studying that book, and hoped we should find it an assistance in getting our lessons. Was it not kind in him? What a different master from Mr. Mather!

"I like every thing but my boarding-place. Nothing is nice or clean. Mrs. Jones and her daughter wear a great deal of finery, and Julia, I believe, thinks she is pretty; but her hair is always in a tangle in the morning, and her teeth and nails never clean. She looks down on us mechanics, and only talks with the young clerks. They, too, give themselves airs, and are always ridiculing our shop-aprons. I wouldn't speak of such things, only they make me vexed and keep alive a bad spirit in my heart. Williams, who is a very sensible fellow, knows more than both of them; yet, because they measure off tapes and rib-

bons behind the counter, they are thought much more of, and are invited into company who would consider it a disgrace to have any thing to do with a mechanic. Is this right? It really seems to me hard and unjust to all those who, while they work with their hands, have upright hearts and intelligent, well-cultivated minds.

"You ask how I spend my evenings. Twice a week I go down town,—one evening to our Friday evening lecture, and one to see what is going on and hear the news. I go with the other apprentices, most of whom go every night. One evening I have spent at Mr. Carr's, who has invited me each week. He has a very nice little house, prettily furnished, and quite a good collection of books. He has a pleasant wife and three little children. I enjoy going there very much,—it seems so homelike. I wish he would ask Williams to go too, for I think he feels hurt that he doesn't, and I have sometimes fancied that he was less cordial than usual to me when I came home; but I cannot help it; and he ought not to blame me. The other evenings I

am at home, reading or writing, unless I am too tired for it; but the evenings are short, and I go to bed early.

"My best time for reading is in the morning. I get up by sunrise,—often before,—which gives me time to dress carefully, to read my Bible, say my prayers and commit my Daily Food to memory, and half an hour or more for other reading before breakfast. I have just finished a volume of travels, and am reading another which Mr. Carr lent me. I often wish I could read some of the fine descriptions of scenery aloud to you or Susan. Williams never gets up till breakfast is ready; but he sits up at night and reads,—sometimes till midnight.

"*June* 30*th.*—Oh, good news! good news! I am going home on Saturday. Mr. Sherman said to-day that, as Monday was the Fourth of July, and, of course, no work could be done, those of us who wished to go home and spend Sunday could leave off work Saturday noon and go. He afterwards came to me and said he was sure I should like to see Hillbury by this time;

that a neighbour of his was going within four miles of you and would take me that far on my way Saturday afternoon; and that I could remain till Tuesday morning. 'The sooner you are back that morning the better,' he said, smiling.

"I believe I am the happiest fellow in the world to-night! Hurra for the Fourth! Oh, I am so glad I can see you all,—father and mother and darling Susan! There's to be a grand parade here, a military procession, and an oration; and the Governor is expected. But I don't care. I would rather see Hillbury—dear old Hillbury—than all the Governors in the world! and I said so in the yard at tea-time. I wish you could have seen the scornful curl on Adams's lip as he heard it. He is one of our dandified young gentleman-clerks. But I didn't care a fig for it. If he hasn't any mother or sister or home that's better worth looking at than all the troops and Governors in the State, I am sorry for him: that's all! I thought Scott looked sad. Alas, poor fellow! he has no dear mother to go to!

"John Ames is going to Hillbury to-

morrow morning: so I will send this over by him. It isn't much like a journal,—more like a letter; but you will excuse all its faults. Tell Susan to look out for me Saturday night."

## CHAPTER XV.

### GOING HOME.

It was with a light step and a heart brimming over with joy and gladness that I left the conveyance which had brought me on my way and walked the remaining four miles to Hillbury. The sky was cloudless, and over my spirit no coming sorrow cast its shadow; yet, as I went up the hill and caught sight of the dear old brown cottage, I thought a strange stillness brooded over it. Nothing of Susan's bright face could be seen at door or window; but I accounted for this by my having come very early. As I passed it at the gate, the dear child opened the door; but her eyes were red and swollen with weeping, and when she saw me she could only throw herself into my arms and burst into passionate sobs. What had hap-

pened? My mother!—was it my mother? Yes, it must be! I knew it was. I knew, without being told, that my mother was dead! and I leaned against the door for support, utterly unable to speak or move. Controlling herself somewhat, Susan said,—

"Oh, Allen, I am so glad you have come before it was too late!"

"Then she is not—not dead?"

"No; but she is only just alive. She can't speak! She won't know you!" And again her tears flowed in a torrent.

My father came, and, pressing my hand fervently, said,—

"This is a sad welcome, Allen; but I am glad you have come. I wrote last night to hasten you."

And, following him into the kitchen, where I started at every sound as if it were my mother's footstep,—that footstep which, alas! would never be heard again,—I sat down and listened to the sad particulars. He told me that she had been comfortable, though gradually losing strength, till the day before, when she was seized with a violent hemorrhage, which continued for

hours, and which, when at last checked, had left her so completely prostrated that she almost immediately sank into a lethargy and had lain ever since entirely senseless and motionless. The physician, who had been with her a good deal of the time, thought she could not possibly live through the night. Indeed, for the last two hours she had seemed to be dying.

I heard all this as if I heard it not,—as if it was somebody else, and not I, who was listening to that fearful tale. I could not speak or think or feel. A terrible weight lay on my heart, crushing all life out of it. But, when I went into the bedroom and saw the pale face and motionless form which was lying there, and the eyes, which had always beamed such a sweet welcome, so heavily closed, and heard the low, unequal breathing, it all came to me as a reality. It was my mother, and she was dying! God forgive me if in that hour my heart rebelled; if I felt that I could not have it so; if under this sudden blow I could not for a time lift up my thoughts to God or heaven, but only see the grave and

feel the depth of my own great sorrow. It was my first bereavement. Silent and stunned, I sat beside the bed till daylight had faded into twilight and twilight into darkness, heeding nothing around me and gazing fixedly upon that death-stricken face. The first breaking of this stillness which I can remember was the voice of our pastor, whose sincere tone of sympathy reached my heart. It was only a word; but the spell was broken and tears flowed,—bitter, burning tears. Yet they relieved me; and, when they all kneeled and implored the presence of the Comforter, I too looked upward. I had a Friend left me, and I seemed to hear his voice, saying, "It is I: be not afraid." Could I not trust Jesus even to take my beloved mother from me? Would she not go to him and walk beside him in the holy city, a pure, shining spirit, freed from all sin and sorrow? The precious hopes of the gospel, with its Saviour and its eternal life, entered into my soul and calmed and strengthened it as nothing else could. Blessed gospel, making the darkness light!

Roused from my stupor, I remembered how selfish I had been to sit there forgetting my dear father and sister, whose sorrow was, if possible, greater than my sorrow. I tried to speak to them, but could only weep; yet it was a sad pleasure to clasp each others' hand and know that our hearts were one.

In time, my soul settled into the sacred calmness which pervaded that chamber of death, and I felt it was good to be there. If Death was in it, gliding so close beside us that we could feel the rustle of his dark wing, Jesus, the Conqueror of Death, was there also; and his face was full of a light that dispelled the darkness, so that the place was no longer fearful.

Those watching night-hours,—that noiseless room, with its shaded light, its unearthly stillness only broken by some light step or the fitful breathing which, as we listened, seemed to flicker and go out,—that bathing of the pallid brow,—that moistening of the parched lips,—that stopping of our heart's pulse as the clock startled us by striking the hour so fearfully distinct, or

as some distant dog uttered a sudden, dismal howl,—how painfully it all comes back to me now! Who has not a memory of such a room,—such a long, long night when he was standing on the confines of two worlds, begirt with thoughts and hopes and fears too great for utterance?

How often, as the minutes slowly rolled away that night, I thought, "Oh, if she could but look at us once more! If she would but speak just once!" And this prayer of my heart, which went up perpetually, was granted. About two o'clock, she revived somewhat, opened her eyes and looked about her, evidently gaining consciousness by degrees. Then came all over her face that sweet, beaming smile so peculiarly her own; and she looked steadily and lovingly at each of us. I was standing nearest at the moment, and bent over and kissed her, whispering, softly, "Dear, dear mother!" and she replied, faintly, as a spirit might, "My dear boy, I am so glad!" Then, looking at my father and Susan, she again softly whispered, "I am going! I am so peaceful! Jesus is

with me!" Then, gazing upon us each with a lingering look full of unutterable love, she said, "You will come—you will *all* come—*soon*." She said "Jesus" repeatedly, as if the very name was sweet to her soul; and then, closing her eyes wearily, she relapsed into unconsciousness. The fitful breathing continued a little longer, and then ceased without a struggle or a sigh.

"We watch'd her breathing through the night,—
Her breathing soft and low,—
As in her breast the wave of life
Kept heaving to and fro.

"So silently we seem'd to speak,
So slowly moved about,
As we had lent her half our powers
To eke her being out.

"Our very hopes belied our fears;
Our fears our hopes belied:
We thought her dying when she slept,
And sleeping when she died.

"For when the morn came, dim and sad
And chill with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed. She had
Another morn than ours."

I wonder now at the composure with

which we all went about the house the next two days, attending to our necessary duties. A sweet calm seemed to pervade and hallow every thing. My mother's face was very serene and beautiful in death,—more beautiful than it had been in life; and, as I gazed upon it, I felt raised above all violent grief, and prayed earnestly that I might live the few years that remained as she would have wished, and then be taken to her home and my home, her Saviour and my Saviour. The veil which parted me from the world of spirits seemed very slight, the step between very short, and life then appeared valuable only as preceding death and eternity. Again and again Susan and I stood beside that beloved form and spoke gently and tearfully of what a dear, blessed mother she had been to us from our infancy; and we rather thanked God, even in that hour of bereavement, for having given her to us than murmured that she was taken from us.

The sudden blow fell most heavily on my poor father, and he seemed utterly broken down by it. We strove to comfort

him; but he could only say, "You are dear, good children. I know you are. But you are not Mary!" No, we could not be; but we promised each other we would strive to be loving, thoughtful children to him all his life long, thus softening and cheering his loneliness as far as possible.

After the precious dust had been laid to its rest in the little churchyard, we drew together in our desolate home and spoke of the future. At first I insisted upon coming home, for I could not bear to leave them alone in this great grief; but, on further thought, we all felt *she* would not have wished it. So it was decided I should return to W—— the next week, and that a sister of my father's should come and assist Susan in the care of the family. I am sure we all felt then as if life could have no more actual enjoyment for us, and that resignation and peace were all that could be hoped for. But in time our feelings changed. We knew it was not honouring her memory to keep aloof from the duties and enjoyments of life, and we entered into them again with almost the same freshness

and vivacity as ever; for the young heart is elastic and readily opens to joyous influences. Still, this grief left an abiding impression on our souls. The world, with that green grave in it, could never be to us what it was before; and wherever we went in after-life, or whatever new ties we formed, we could never, never forget that we were *motherless!*

The week I spent at home proved a sad and cheerless one in spite of every effort to be hopeful and cheerful. Home was so changed, everywhere we so missed the sweet presence of her who had been its light and joy, and we so constantly found ourselves turning to look for her sympathy and counsel, that our hearts ached with a sense of unutterable loneliness. Could we always live without her? Oh, what a desolate, sad life it would be!

One day, when this feeling was pressing most heavily upon me, my father came in, holding a manuscript which he said was addressed to me. It was in my dear mother's beloved hand. I pressed it to my lips, and fast-falling tears for some minutes blinded

my eyes so I could not read it. It was indeed for me, and dated only a very few days previous to her death,—a precious token that to the last I had been in her thoughts. It was as follows:—

"My dear Allen:—

"I feel as if something might prevent my saying in words what I wish to say to you, and so take my pen,—though it is a poor substitute. I am conscious of growing weaker day by day, and believe I am much nearer my end than any one supposes. If this be merely the fancy of a diseased imagination, you will not see these lines; but if it is a shadow of coming evil, and I do not see you again, I shall rejoice to have written them.

"I have spoken of coming *evil;* yet one thing I wished to say was, that death has no terrors for me,—that it does not seem like an evil. Why should it? Will it not take me to my Saviour and to the home he has prepared for those who love him? I have sometimes doubted if I loved him or had any right to appropriate his gracious

promises; but for a few weeks I have felt no doubts. All fears have been removed, and a peace unspeakable has filled my soul. I believe Jesus will go with me through the dark valley, even as he has been with me through all my earthly pilgrimage, and will lead me to his Father's house, where are many mansions. Therefore, my dear child, do not mourn when I am gone. I fear you will feel very lonely when you come home and find no mother here to welcome you, for you have been always a loving child to me; but I do not wish you to think sadly, but cheerfully, of me,—as of one who has entered into a rest for which her soul longed. Think of me tenderly, too, as one who loved you far better than you have ever conceived,—as one who still loves you and is permitted, perhaps, to watch over your path, an unseen but loving spirit. We know not how this may be; but we know that Jesus is near you and that he loves you even more tenderly than I have done. He can save you from all evil; while my poor arm was weak and powerless to protect you.

"Can it be that I shall never speak another word of warning or of counsel to you? Oh, my child, would I had been more faithful to you! But Jesus can teach you and guide you; and to his Almighty arm I commit you in faith, knowing he will keep you. Go to *him* now for counsel, for sympathy, for strength, and he will be better to you than any earthly friend. I believe you are a child of his; but even his children wander into forbidden paths; but I trust you will live very near to him, my child, finding in him all fulness and blessedness. You will be often tempted to plunge into business and pleasure so eagerly as to forget God and prayer; but do not yield to the temptation, as you value your happiness or usefulness. Let no haste be too great to admit of your asking God's blessing on your business or recreation; and never engage in any thing on which you cannot conscientiously hope for it. Let the apostle's motto be your's:—'Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' Seek for a contented, humble spirit. Naturally ambitious, I fear you

will too often be seeking for great things in the world, and, if you cannot attain to distinction among men, will be discontented and repining. This is one form of selfishness which must be displeasing to God, in whose sight only moral excellence is of any value. I would have you cherish an honourable desire for success and influence; but beware lest it become an unhallowed fire. Pray that you may desire to be useful rather than great; and may God so kindle in your breast a noble endeavour to bless your fellow-men that no meaner motive may find room to enter!

"It may not be necessary to speak to you again of being perfectly upright and truthful in your business-transactions. I trust you feel the necessity of it; but I must refer to it once more, for I would fain have my dear boy a mirror of nobleness in this particular,—not contented with being merely honest so far as keeping man's laws is concerned, but possessing a keen sense of justice and of what is due to your fellow-men. If subterfuges and equivocations are regarded as right by those with whom you

bargain, scorn them with all your heart. Rise above all trickery and deception, and choose to be poor in the sight of men rather than dishonest in the sight of God. I believe you *will* thus choose. I feel a confidence that you will not disappoint my hopes. Your decision in coming to W—— showed you could sacrifice inclination to duty. Oh, my son, that decision gave me more true joy than I can express; and you may always have the consolation of knowing that your mother's last hours were sweetened by this act of filial duty. You will be blessed by the reward of an approving conscience, and, I doubt not, even in this life will prosper, for God's blessing maketh rich and addeth no sorrow; but, if not, the reward of right-doing will surely come. My blessing, my dear child, will rest upon you, and my last prayer will——"

Here the manuscript ended. It had evidently been laid into the drawer hastily, and, before the pen could be resumed, that fatal attack came on. It was a sacred legacy to me; and, in all the years that

have intervened, I have never looked at it without feeling that my mother's spirit was very near to me. It was most precious to me, cut off from all closing intercourse as I was, to know that she had blessed me at the last; and the remembrance of it shed a sweetness over all my future life.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### MY TWENTIETH YEAR.

THE leaving of my desolate home was sad enough; and, when I found myself once more at W——, I was overwhelmed with such a feeling of loneliness as I had never had before. Mr. Sherman showed much kind sympathy, every one was considerate and thoughtful, and I tried to be cheerful for the sake of others; but, when I went into my own room, a sense of desolation would come upon me. How could I care to read or write, now she would never know it or be made happy by my improvement? Yet would she not know it? It was hard to think of her as quite away; and often and often at night, when the stars looked down in their glittering stillness, I thought I could see her gazing

at me and hear her sweet, low voice. I believe this fancy was an incentive to right action; and, if that were a mere fancy, it was no fancy that Jesus was watching me; and I tried to confide in him now as my dearest friend. But I often forgot him, and my heart grew cold and a tide of worldly cares and pleasures came in; and then I omitted prayer and became very guilty and miserable. But when I came to myself, and sought Jesus anew, as a vile sinner needing pardon, his arms were always open to receive the wanderer, guilty and ungrateful as I had been.

Occasionally I went home to pass a Sunday. Though sadly changed, it was still the dearest spot on earth; and my father and Susan always gave me a most joyful welcome. I looked with pride on my sweet sister, whose manners were so kind and gentle to all and whose spirit was so self-sacrificing and lovely. My father doated on her. She was the pet lamb of the fold, the light of his heart and home. Aunt Rachel was with them,—a help in many things, but ah, so unlike my mother!

Susan had planted a rose-tree by my mother's grave, and we watered it plentifully with our tears; and, standing in that sacred spot, we felt more than ever that we were closely allied to each other. It touched whatever of manliness there was in my heart to see how this dear sister leaned upon and looked up to me; and I secretly resolved I would prove worthy of her confidence.

The succeeding year was marked by few important events. Several months of it were spent in A——, where Mr. Sherman had contracted to build a church. I worked hard, but cheerfully. My health was excellent, and no one could outstrip me in climbing the highest points or striking the heaviest blow. I felt a laudable pride in my capacity to accomplish a great day's work; and when driving nails I used sometimes to say merrily to myself. "This is better than being a soldier, chopping off heads, — better, too, than standing at a writing-desk or behind a counter." My employment gave full scope to my muscular powers and was developing my figure

into broad, manly proportions and my heart into a healthful strength and cheerfulness. Each day increased my skill and proficiency in my business; and my activity and thoroughness often gained me commendations from Mr. Sherman, whose quick eye saw every thing and who always enjoyed bestowing praise when he could.

Two changes which occurred during the winter gave me pleasure. One was that Mr. Sherman made arrangements for my boarding in his family, where I found a most delightful home. The friends who came to his house were intelligent, and many of them well-educated, persons, though mostly mechanics and their families. I do not think I had much cause to regret being shut out from the circle in which our clerks moved; for, though there might be in it more refinement and cultivation of manners, I doubt if there was more genuine good sense and knowledge of a practical kind than I found here. I had also access to a well-selected library, and read a great deal in the evenings and sometimes aloud to Mr. and Mrs. Sherman.

The other change was in Scott, my fellow-apprentice. From being boisterous and profane, he had become quiet and steady; and, though not in all respects what I could wish, he was astonishingly improved in deportment and character. Unfortunately, he had never acquired a taste for reading, and was therefore driven abroad for amusement at evening; but he abstained from the low haunts he had frequented. He came to the Sunday-school, and seemed to have a respect for the things he had once so constantly ridiculed. I sometimes wondered if my mother had prayed for him, and if that dying prayer was not answered, or if even now, in the world of glory, she was permitted to ask for blessings on those left below. More than once he said to me,—

"I believe Mr. Sherman is a Christian. I used to think religion was all a sham; but there is something real in *his* religion. He lives as if he believed it."

If all professing Christian masters lived as if they believed religion to be something real, would there be so many unbelieving, impenitent apprentices?

This year of my life, I think, was one of advance in all respects. I was steadily acquiring more knowledge of business and of men and gradually gaining truer views of life and of my own position and duties. Seeing how labour could be united to the noblest aspirations, and how Christian principles, carried out into business-life, imparted industry and energy, sterling integrity and a nobleness of aim to commonplace duties, I began to respect my position as a labourer and to feel that it was a truly honourable and desirable one. I felt that I was in my right place and was at peace.

Occasionally I had a return of my old pride and discontent; but rarely. Once I remember being greatly mortified by meeting a young man of whom I had known a good deal in New York,—a dashing, good-natured son of a merchant, whom we had regarded as quite our superior in Harry Dawson's set. I was going to my work one day at noon, dressed as usual in my working-clothes and carrying some of my tools in my hand. My first feeling was a wish to avoid him; but it was too late. He saw me

and exclaimed, "Why, is this you, Richmond?" with such a look of unfeigned astonishment that I saw he felt—just as I expected he would—that I had come down terribly in the world.

"I am an apprentice to a carpenter now," I answered. "Where are you living?"

"Oh, still in New York, of course," he said, with a contemptuous smile. "What in the world possessed you to come here and live such a dismal life as this? Why, such a fellow as you might get a good place in the city any day."

"I have decided in favour of being a mechanic; and I like it very much," I said.

He was in haste, and I had no time to spare: so, after a few inquiries about old friends, we parted, he in his genteel dress, with an air of self-satisfied complacency and an assumption of superiority which I found it hard to bear. I had tried to be brave in speaking of my occupation; but there was a miserable weakness still in my heart which kept me for hours contrasting his lot with mine and reminding me that I might have been as well off as he, but that now I should

never be any thing but a poor, despised mechanic.

I did not recover my composure all the afternoon; and not until I had gathered at evening with the family around their cheerful fireside could I shake off the miserable depression. Then better feelings came. I saw I was surrounded by cheerful and elevating influences; and my heart was grateful for them. How or where could I be better off? And then, too, came the sweet remembrance of having done what was *right* and the consciousness that my mother's dying blessing rested upon my head. My heart glowed at this thought with a delight no earthly station or treasure could have conferred; and I looked upward to see approving faces bending upon me from above and to feel that peace which only an approving conscience can bestow. I felt rich, contented, willing to labour,—to be looked down upon, if need be,—if only I might be approved of God and the holy ones who surrounded him. Of what consequence was it, I asked myself, if a poor fellow-mortal did not respect me, when I

might commune with such unseen friends and have a spirit in harmony with their's? I could say, from my heart, that it was of no consequence, and that I would not in future be annoyed by knowing I was looked down upon by those who could not appreciate my motives. And yet, alas! I did suffer when again brought into contact with those who regarded me as an inferior,—so deep-rooted was my foolish pride and so hard to be eradicated were the evil propensities of my nature.

The second year of my apprenticeship glided away so pleasantly and swiftly as to leave few distinct impressions on the memory. I kept my journal pretty punctually; but it is only a record of passing events, of little consequence in the review. One experience, however, stands out more prominently, and had such an influence in forming my character—especially my religious one—that I will recount it here.

. Mr. Dean, our pastor, was a most earnest, godly man, whose heart was always in his work; and early in the winter of this year

he requested any who might wish for personal conversation on religious subjects to come to his study on Wednesday evenings. I hesitated about accepting this invitation; yet my conscience urged me to do it. I had of late been so much engrossed by worldly pleasures, and had thought so little of God and my duties to him, that I doubted very much whether I had any reason to consider myself one of his children. The Scriptures spoke of such as being "born again;" as "new creatures in Christ Jesus;" as being "transformed into his image;" and I asked myself if a heart so full of evil desires as mine—so slow to commune with heaven, so filled with a love of the world—could be a renewed heart. So I went, on the appointed evening, and told Mr. Dean of my former hopes and present doubts. He advised me not to dwell too much upon the past, but to inquire, earnestly, "Am I willing *now* to consecrate myself wholly to the Saviour,—to relinquish whatever is opposed to his will, and live for him?" This question distressed me greatly; and I came home trying

to evade it,—to fall back on my old hope and so escape any searching examination into my present motives. I had wandered so far from the right path that I was unwilling to make the effort to retrace my steps, and would fain have wandered still farther on in the easy downward road. But I could not do it. Conscience was aroused, and I was forced to look at myself. Never had I seen in my heart more vile and corrupt affections or a greater want of holy love. There *was* an obstacle standing between me and my Saviour. I saw it, felt it. Was I willing to give it up? This question filled my soul with such anguish as showed me how far I had strayed from the right path. I had become acquainted with a circle of gay young ladies, (the very circle I had once so much wished to enter,) and they had smiled upon and sometimes flattered me, thus quickening into flame the latent sparks of vanity which lay concealed in my foolish heart. Among them was one who filled a large space in my thoughts. Gay and giddy I knew her to be; but she was very fascinating.

Full of life, dressing fashionably, singing sweetly, playing on the piano, (then a rarer accomplishment than now,) and belonging to a showy though not well-educated family, her notice had flattered me; and gradually she had become more and more the centre around which my thoughts revolved. Had she possessed principles of a high order, her influence over me might have been salutary; but she was vain, and at best a silly trifler; and few things could have more effectually lessened my spirituality than being drawn within the sphere of her attractions. When I sat down to read my Bible, her image came between me and the sacred page. When I went to church, my eyes and thoughts wandered in the direction to find her, instead of rising towards a pure and holy God. And in the stillness of my own room, where my soul used to come into blissful communion with the unseen Jehovah, I now dreamed of pleasure-parties, pretty faces and the thousand follies which occupied me when in society. I was deteriorating every way. As I went out almost

every evening, I found little time for reading; and that little was given to the lightest works of poetry or fiction, because they were read and talked about by my new associates; and when Mr. Sherman gently hinted that I was not turning my evenings to so good account as formerly, I was offended, and thought he was interfering with what did not concern him. In this manner I had been sinking lower and lower; and yet, till Mr. Dean's searching test-question had led me to a rigid self-examination, I had been unconscious of it. Now the truth was clearly revealed. I had been preferring the indulgence of my own selfish desires to serving God, and in my endeavours after other good had wellnigh forgotten him.

I had no doubt as to what I *ought* to do. In allowing myself to be attracted by a giddy, irreligious girl, I had gone away from God; and, if I would now return to my allegiance, I must withdraw from her influence. The question was, whether I was willing to do this. As I look back upon it, my state of mind at that time

seems very foolish; but then I felt as if a great sacrifice was required of me, which it was almost, if not quite, impossible for me to make; and my selfish heart rebelled. I see now that it was only a boyish passion that stirred my heart, and that I had then no conception even of a pure and hallowed affection, such as God sanctions and which elevates the whole nature into a more beautiful harmony with all that is truly fair and excellent; but I could not see it then. I blindly clung to my idol, miserably as it degraded me; and for weeks I vacillated between its claims and those of God upon my affections. Oh, how infinite was the love which still forbore to withdraw itself from my guilty heart! How wonderful was the patience of the Holy Spirit, which would not desert my wretched soul, but still sought to draw it heavenward!

At length I yielded. I laid myself once more at the feet of Jesus,—more than ever vile and helpless,—with the old cry, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." I had within *me* no strength to turn away from my follies; but in *him* was all power,

and he rescued me! He put around my weak, miserable soul his Almighty arm and raised it from its degradation. He gave me strength to turn away from all created good and to worship and serve the living God. Sustained by him, I could say,—

> "The dearest idol I have known,
> Whate'er that idol be,
> Help me to tear it from thy throne
> And worship only thee."

Again I tasted of the sweet joy of pardon and reconciliation; again I felt how infinitely superior to the husks of earthly enjoyment was the living bread of which Jesus gives his followers to eat.

This experience of my own weakness made me more humble and watchful. I was so afraid of my own heart that I clung closer to the Saviour's arm to be upheld by it. But my pride was wounded and my soul humbled in another way. All at once, my idol treated me with disdain; and I heard of her saying to a mutual friend, or rather acquaintance,—

"The conceit of that Allen Richmond is intolerable! Did he *dare* to suppose I would regard him as my equal?"

How my sensitive heart quivered with wounded pride! How bitter was the mortification I endured! But this exquisite pain was salutary. It was hard to bear, but it broke the spell which had bound me. I saw she had only trifled with my feelings to give herself an hour's pleasure; and my heart was free,—free to turn to my dear little sister, more meekly and tenderly than ever,—free to cherish my mother's pure and hallowed image more reverentially,—free, above all, to love Jesus as my truest friend and to find in his service my highest joy.

One scene more, and I have completed my sketch of the first twenty years of my life,—years which, to a great extent, made me what I have been on earth, what I shall be in the unseen future.

My twentieth birthday was on Sunday, the 7th of June. It was a sweet summer day, when all nature was filled with beauty and fragrance,—when God's love seemed to encircle the earth in undimmed radiance,

even as the blue arch of heaven bent over it without a cloud,—when all was so still that the very hills and trees seemed resting and worshipping in sympathy with human souls. On that lovely day, so full of summer beauty, Susan and I stood up in the old church in Hillbury, and, before the great congregation, avouched the Lord Jehovah to be our God and pledged ourselves to be his servants forever.

It was a day never to be forgotten. Whatever was most tender and hallowed in the past, most sweet and sacred in the present, or most joyful and inspiring in the future, gathered around us in that house of God, till our hearts swelled with unutterable emotions. It seemed to me as if my mother's spirit must be near us, rejoicing in the consecration; and, when the pastor spoke of our "being encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," my heart thrilled with a deep sense of the presence of unseen beings.

Yes, we had indeed come in our weakness "to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in hea-

ven," and to "Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel," trusting to be cleansed by it from all our pollutions.

It was a solemn pledge for weak, sinful beings like us to take upon our lips,—one we could never have presumed to utter had not Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you alway." We believed he had said this to *us* as well as to the first company of disciples, and that he would fulfil his promise. Why, then, should we fear to enlist under the banner of such a glorious Leader,—to gird on our armour and go forth to battle, sustained by his continual presence and his unfailing strength? Thus encompassed, thus sustained, might we not hope to overcome our foes and at last to sing that triumphal song, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord"?

Twenty years of my life had passed; and what precious years do they now appear to me! Not that they were my happiest years, for I have known many peaceful, happy

days since then; but they were the most important years of my whole life,—the forming years which determined the character of all the succeeding ones. Could young men but see, as I see, how every step they take is telling on the future, they would oftener pause and think. I pray God that, if any such should read this record of my youth, they may ask themselves, "Do I not need a guide in the journey of life which I am now beginning? I see it stretching out into an endless hereafter; and am I wise and strong enough to travel to its close alone,—unaided? Shall I reject the proffered help of Him who gently asks, 'Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth'?"

I am now, at fifty, what I hoped to be at twenty,—a contented, prosperous mechanic. I became a partner of Mr. Sherman's, and the business prospered and enlarged till I have acquired all that is needful of worldly wealth. I have a home in W——, with all the comforts of life within it and around it,

and some of its luxuries,—for such I consider my well-filled library, my few fine pictures, my spacious gardens and grounds adorned with ornamental shrubs and choice fruit-trees. The garden and grounds are my places of recreation, where I spend many happy hours. I have earned my money honestly, and I have tried to expend it wisely, not forgetting those whose cup is less bountifully filled.

My wife, now a sedate and gentle matron, has been in later years what my mother was in my earlier ones,—the wise, judicious Christian friend, whose sweet influence has always been an elevating and refining one, and whose tender counsels have helped me onward in the heavenly life. Another Allen and Susan are growing up, and, with a troop of younger brothers and sisters, fill our house with the glad music of children's voices.

The great event of the year is a week's visit at Hillbury, when we all go over to "Aunt Susan's" to rove about among the green hills, to eat her delicious strawberries-and-cream, to inspect her dairy and see the

cows driven home from pasture. "Aunt Susan" is the wife of a farmer in Hillbury; and her sunny spirit is now the light and joy of her husband's home, as it once was that of her father's house.

We are all as gay and frolicsome as kittens at Hillbury, for the air of that dear old place makes a boy of me again; and my wife and children love it, with its picturesque environment of wooded hills, almost as dearly as I do myself. The children laugh when I tell them how I roved barefooted over the pastures and played ball with Tom Reed, now, like myself, a gray-headed, elderly man,—I, who look so old to them. To me it seems scarcely a day since I was a boy; but in the interval a lifetime has slipped away.

Very often we stand beside a green grave in the little rural cemetery and talk to our children of our dear, sweet mother; and we cannot but feel as if her spirit still hovered around her children, rejoicing in their joy, and hoping, even amid all the bliss of heaven, for a final reunion to them. We cannot believe hearts grow colder in that

"better land," but rather that there every pure affection is strengthened into a holier warmth, and that He who setteth the solitary in families here will rejoice to see them gathered there, together worshipping Him who is the light and the glory of that heavenly home.

THE END.